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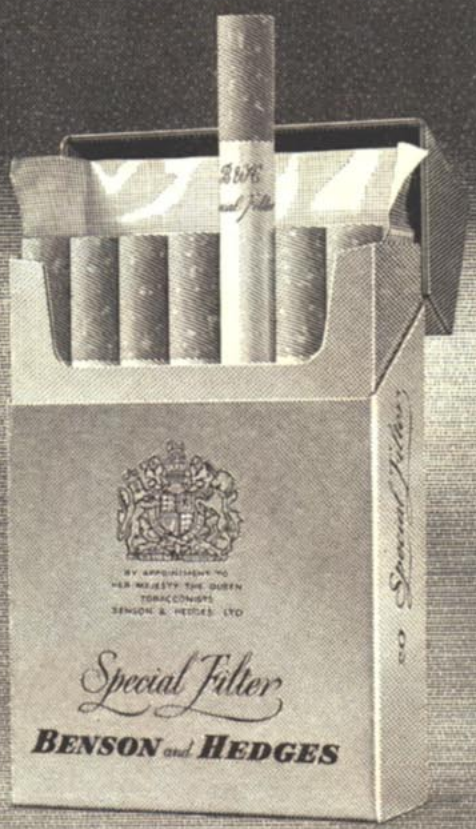

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APRIL 1963 VOL. XX NO. 4

ASSISTANT EDITORS: *Margot Walmsley, Francis Hope.* CIRCULATION & ADVERTISING: *John Hall*
Published monthly at 25 Haymarket London SW1. All issues 4s. a copy (USA & Canada 75c.). Postage: 6d. Annual subscription (inc. postage): 50s.: USA & Canada $8.50: India Rs.18. Six months: 27s.: $4.50: Rs.11. Subscriptions & Trade department: Rolls House Publishing Co. Ltd. Breams Building London EC4 (Holborn 5708). US & Canadian subscriptions may be entered with British Publications Inc. 30 East 60th Street New York 22 or Eastern News Distributors Inc. 255 Seventh Avenue New York 1. US newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors Inc. Second-class mail privileges authorised at New York N.Y. © *1963 by Encounter Ltd.*

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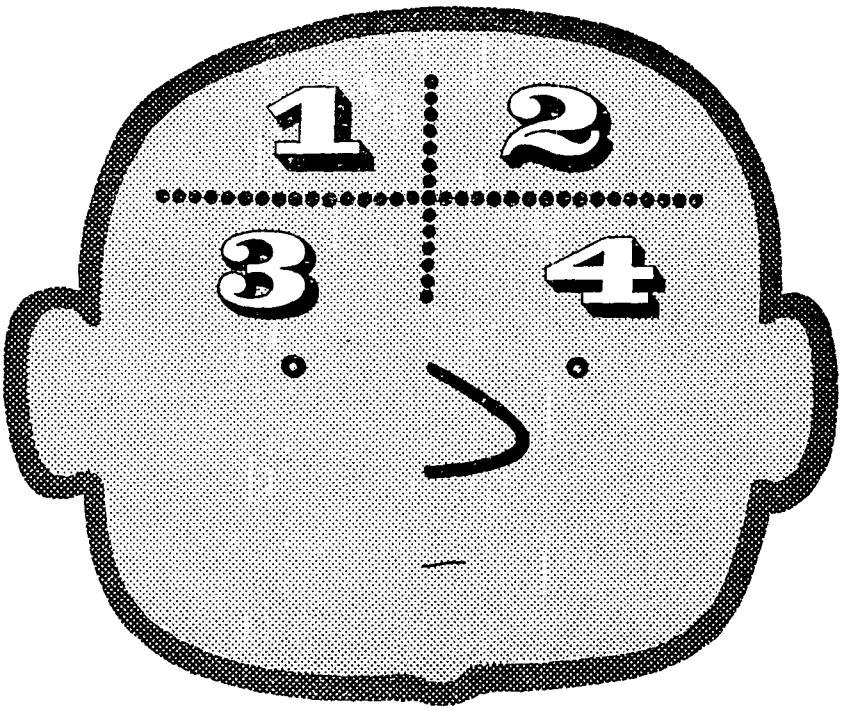

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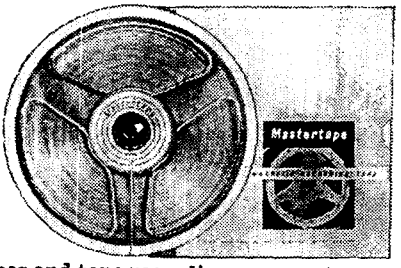

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Noel Annan

The Universities

THE UNIVERSITIES are in politics whether or not they like it. For years no one has disturbed them—the last Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge was forty years ago. M.P.s who have tried to investigate through the Public Accounts Committee how the University Grants Committee spends its grant have been foiled by Treasury officials who blandly state that it would not be in the public interest to reveal any details. Thus the U.G.C. has been able to spend public money yet not suffer political interference—a solution which some other countries regard as another manifestation of British political genius. But just as the U.G.C. was not controlled by the Government so the universities were not controlled by the U.G.C. It was a tiny department that allocated funds and left the universities to plan their own development. After the post-war bulge of ex-servicemen had passed through them they heaved a sigh of relief, and the U.G.C., which had sanctioned the founding of one new university at Keele, announced that a period of "consolidation" had arrived. The universities were not expected to expand. These were the days when an influential woman don at Cambridge could argue that to found a third women's college was absurd as there were "not enough able girls to fill it." Even as late as 1958 the highest of pundits declared that only a "small reservoir" of potential university entrants existed while only two-and-a-half years ago a pundit of a different age group, Mr. Kingsley Amis, warned us that More Means Worse [ENCOUNTER, June, 1960].

And then suddenly public opinion changed. Overnight a vast army of potential students was discovered. As the bulge entered the grammar schools, more boys and girls stayed on in the Sixth Forms and applied for the free university education that they could now get. At the universities the more were found to be much the same. The U.G.C. changed gear and made plans for seven universities. The civic universities (with the exception of Keele) became eager to expand. Everyone began to bandy about the fact that only 4 per cent of adolescents would go to a university by 1969. A Fabian group calculated that there would then be 212,000 fewer places in higher education than were needed, and that by 1979 the short-fall would be nearly half a million. Then Sir Geoffrey Crowther weighed in. He had alluded in his Report to the harm that was done to sixth form education by excessive specialisation forced on the schools by the pressure to pass the departmental requirements laid down by universities. He now passed to a swingeing attack on the universities for neglecting their duty to teach (as well as research) and suggested that they could teach many more students especially if they would use their plant—laboratories and lecture rooms—in a less frivolous manner. People began to talk of the need to think less in terms of an intellectual élite and more in terms of producing a broad upper echelon of intelligence—qualified men and women trained in skills appropriate to post-war society.

Now, IT IS TRUE that some of those who contrasted the figure of 4 per cent with that of 30 per cent in America forgot that a more important figure is that of the number of students who stay the course and graduate; and that wastage in British universities is markedly less than, say, at the Sorbonne. It is also true that they ignored the quite separate structure of higher education under the Ministry of Education—Colleges of Advanced Technology, Technical Colleges, Teachers' Training Colleges, and professional

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institutes, which add considerably to the numbers of those receiving education after the age of eighteen and which bring the total to about 8–10 per cent. When at last the intelligentsia and the universities deigned to notice that these institutions existed they were faced with a new set of awkward questions.

Why, asked Crowther and Sir Eric Ashby, was so much care taken to brand these institutions as grossly inferior to universities? Why were they permitted to issue only diplomas and not confer degrees? Was there not a built-in snobbery in higher education which was as pernicious as that which exists in our secondary education? What was more, were these institutions doing anything in teaching markedly inferior to what universities did?—perhaps indeed the highly specialised courses under the thumb of university faculties and departments were not as surpassingly excellent and as appropriate as the dons themselves liked to believe?

Meanwhile the civil service began to show signs of rebellion. The Treasury discovered that it was violating its own principles. Its duty is to scrutinise expenditure, not to become a spending department like any other ministry: yet here it was disbursing to the universities not the two millions of forty years ago but fifty-four millions a year. In the last two years, therefore, the universities have found themselves regarded to their astonishment as part, and only a part, of a system of higher education. They are under scrutiny. The daily and weekly press teems with articles. The U.G.C. has set up the Hale Committee to look into their teaching methods. The Prime Minister has set up the Robbins Committee to survey the whole field of higher education. The examiners are themselves being examined.

AT THIS POINT in time, therefore, Professor Herbert Butterfield's Lindsay Memorial Lectures on *The Universities and Education To-day* should be particularly interesting.[1] He began by telling how a professor at Keele suggested that he might like to take the chance of delivering some home-truths at the end of his two-year tenure as Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge. "There was a twinkle in his eye to indicate that... here was an unusual opportunity for letting some cats out of the bag"—an opportunity which a permanent Vice-Chancellor in a civic university never enjoys. The twinkle in Butterfield's eye as he spoke these words must have been blinding. The students at Keele got no sign or smell of a cat. What they did get were pages of mellow wisdom and a remarkable example of the adversitive style.

The classic use of the adversitive style is said to occur on a tombstone in Northumberland where a family, scorning the falsehoods of lapidary inscriptions, wrote:

> She was temperate, chaste, and charitable, but she was proud, peevish, and passionate. She was an affectionate wife and a tender mother but her husband and child seldom saw her countenance without a disgusting frown....

A dozen elegant antitheses follow.

In these lectures assertions are similarly followed a few pages later by counter-assertions. Universities exist to serve society *but* they must search for truth independent of any immediate utilitarian end. The State has a right to intervene *but* the autonomy of universities must be preserved. More students should enjoy higher education *but* universities must not grow too large. New subjects must be capable of being introduced into the curriculum *but* simply to add them will not radically change our experience. In the great period of Dutch and German universities two centuries ago professors were saved from narrow-mindedness by being closely related to public life, *but* professors at the heart of government are dangerous. Research students should be given greater attention *but* undergraduates should not be neglected for their sake. Specialisation ensures that students shall be trained in techniques and those deeper kinds of analysis that give structure to knowledge, *but* learning a technique can be so stultifying that we need to invent a technique of not being technical. Specialisation has been caused by the pressure of exams and by universities failing to devise tests to expose the crammed, *but* it is not in itself evil—the evil lies in the narrowness with which it is handled. Specialists should not push their own subject *but* history offers a unique insight into the humanities, *though* English literature might be more important; *but* we must recall that there is no short-cut to a humanist education. Sociology, like education, is now no longer a dirty word in universities *but* "a recent critic of the historiography of the Mongols" observed that Gibbon might not have

[1] London (1962). Routledge & Kegan Paul, 12s. 6d.

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written so freshly had he been constrained by established lines of thought. (Had the critic considered how far the rules of rhetoric constrained the imagination of Elizabethan poets?) Certainly men may train for professions at the university *but* technologists should not be admitted simply because they argue that they would gain much by being permitted to be there. And so on.

THESE SCRUPULOUS HESITATIONS are the product of Butterfield's sense of the complexity of history which is the most powerful determinant of his long and passionate study of the subject. But concealed in their folds you suddenly see something stirring in the bag that looks astonishingly like a cat. It is an appeal to the academic profession to resist pressure to increase the number of university students quickly because haste is the most pernicious danger in education, and therefore we must not "attempt to find too swift an adjustment of means to ends." It is an appeal to resist the introduction of studies that "reflect current ideas or popular desires . . . and sacrifice long-term values." In just such a mood Burke wrote his famous defence of the unreformed House of Commons. "Our representation is as nearly perfect as the necessary imperfection of human affairs and of human creatures will suffer it to be; it is a subject of prudent and honest use . . . and not of captious criticism and rash experiment." And in remembering that passage one also remembers G. M. Young's dry comment on it: "Is there no such thing as honest criticism and prudent experiment?"—is it not possible for a "current idea" to contain "long-term value"?[2]

These lectures may be innocent because, as always in Butterfield's writing, there are many layers of inference and, as he has recently told us, many "trip-wires" deliberately planted in order to make critics fall flat on their faces. But it is difficult not to take them as a sighting shot upon the Robbins Committee. The adversitive style suggests a line of defence. If history teaches us how complex all problems are, whatever direction the Robbins Committee suggests higher education should take is most likely to be wrong. "Ah!" lamented a junior minister the other day, "you don't know how terrible it is to have been taught by Herbert. One learnt that any reform would certainly produce unpredictable consequences, quite often the very contrary of those which it was intended to effect." These lectures embody the politics of inaction.

THEY ARE NOT necessarily the politics of reaction. There are, of course, die-hards in all universities: professors in civic universities unable to contemplate any diminution of their powers over their departments or in the Senate, dons at Oxbridge rigid with piety towards the past and embalmed in college rituals all of which seem to them vital to retain.

But the majority of dons are as ready for change to-day as they were over a hundred years ago. It is an error to suppose that the dons between 1830–50 blindly opposed reform and had to be forced to kiss the rod of the Royal and Statutory Commissioners in the 'fifties. Strenuous reform at Cambridge had been going on for two decades, and among the progressive party could be found Heads of Houses such as Philpott and Whewell who cleared away a good deal of lumber. Nor was it true that they were oblivious of the duty that universities owed to society. But even so, the ancient universities could not reform themselves without major intervention by the State. Why? Because various educational ideals conflicted with each other. It was difficult to reform the examination system because it depended on the teaching of college tutors who were set in their ways and few in number. It was difficult to censure absentee professors when they could not get an audience for their lectures—undergraduates, then as now, being reluctant to attend courses on which they would not be examined. It was difficult to raise the standard of the pass degree because this would encourage cramming which all deplored. It was difficult to institute an entrance exam because poor men whose parents had been unable to afford to give them a good education would not be able to pass it. It was difficult to introduce new subjects because, compared to mathematics, they lacked precision and provoked controversy. It was difficult to abolish life fellowships—for without security of tenure who would be willing to settle down to teach?

The way out of the maze was made yet harder by the fact that the dons then were—as men in every generation are—the prisoners of the tacit assumptions of their age. Most dons

[2] Most of the proposals for change in higher education are meant to reinforce long-term values. You can, of course, write off research into computers and teaching students how to programme as mere fashion; those who think these activities worth doing believe, however, that major intellectual changes are going to result from them.

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then believed that the health of the country depended on the strength of "our happy Establishment in Church and State." Toleration might demand that Dissenters should be permitted to set up their own private colleges and schools, but the two ancient universities of the nation must remain Anglican because they existed primarily to ensure that there should never be lacking men who would be of service to Church and State. Undergraduate education was, therefore, all important and the duty to research residual. Immense respect, moreover, was paid to legal obligations and to property. The Common Law stood as a bulwark against arbitrary interference with property and a life fellowship was regarded as a piece of property won in fair competition. Thus colleges which welcomed reform had often to wait for a quarter-of-a-century for many of the reforms to become effective because the respect for legal rights was so great that absentee or useless Fellows could not be dispossessed.

By the end of the 19th century such assumptions seemed arbitrary and quaint. Victorian reform had dissolved them. But the reform movement of that time engendered a new set of assumptions. Many of these imprison our own minds to-day. Academic freedom and self-government seem self-evidently good. The obligation on dons to research is unquestioned. So is the division of universities into faculties and departments each offering specialist courses to students. The Honours B.A. degree then became all-important and is still jealously guarded: all the teaching resources were lavished on undergraduates and few funds were available for post-graduates. New universities were not allowed to experiment. They had to submit to tutelage and prove their respectability—Leicester, for instance, had long to submit to the examination system of London. The civic universities gave a professional qualification for those in a lower social stratum. Springing out of 19th-century industrialism and provincialism they challenged metropolitan aristocratic English culture; but they were too small in size and lacking in funds to disturb the superior status of London or the old Scottish universities, still less of Oxford and Cambridge.

The ancient universities educated those who by birth were destined to rule or who by ability made good their claim to join the governing classes. They taught a small élite which dominated the political and professional life of the country by providing it with many of its leaders. This élite consisted of the sons of the upper and upper-middle classes plus those who had fought their way up the ladder of the State school system—and whose parents could scrape together enough money to supplement their sons' scholarships. Some expected to sit in Parliament or in City boardrooms. Most were expected to enter the professions—to become diplomats, priests, lawyers, and doctors, to pass into the Civil Service or govern the colonies, to emerge as dons or schoolmasters. Some went into industry with degrees in science and engineering. Some were later to staff the new cultural bureaucracy of the B.B.C. and the Arts Council. An increasing number stayed on to do research but the number was still small.

It was also a cardinal assumption that the very clever and the very stupid ought to live side by side. They were believed to educate each other. For the clever and ambitious to get a First—as those who study *Times* obituaries will have noticed—was a permanent hall-mark for life: to miss a First, something which had to be explained away. But no sort of stigma attached to the average, the lazy, or the stupid: their passport could be stamped with a Blue or by making their mark in the Union or in university clubs.

A golden mystique settled upon undergraduate life at the ancient universities. These were the years when you grew up; this was when you learnt how to get on with all sorts and conditions of men; here the æsthetes threw off the burden of public school philistinism, and the hearties could play while being insensibly civilised. It was the life of "laughter and the love of friends."

There is less laughter to-day. The pressure for places at all universities is too keen. Dons know well that those days are past. For instance, the proportion of university students at Oxbridge is diminishing. In 1938, a quarter of the graduates in England and Wales graduated from Oxbridge, whereas by 1970 only one-fifteenth will graduate there. The civic universities are no longer provincial. In 1908, 78 per cent of the students at Leeds came from within thirty miles, in 1955 only 40 per cent were local. Yet when faced with the new situation that has arisen with the increase of potential students or with a variety of other problems, *e.g.*, the cost of scientific research and the shortage of certain teachers, dons become imprisoned in the academic structure that they

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have inherited because they still partly apply the assumptions of an age that is disappearing, just as did their predecessors in early Victorian days.

The same arguments that were used then are used to-day. When someone suggests that on some issues a solution will have to be imposed upon the universities—or upon colleges and departments within a university—if they cannot themselves agree, the cry of "Academic Freedom" is raised. And the changes themselves are challenged by appealing to another criterion—the Idea of a University. Anything, so it is argued, that tends to destroy the *essential character* of the university must be resisted; and as, in education, practically all change involves relinquishing something that was, and very probably is still, valuable, the onus of proof on those who hold that changes must come to establish something *more* valuable is crushing.

There is a further line of defence, linking these two bastions. It is designed to halt the advance of the administrator. Butterfield is nowhere more telling than when he points out the failings of the administrative mind which thinks in terms of teaching load, professorial spread, bench space and building user and which forgets the focus of all education—the personal impact of the teacher upon his students. He is very right. All discussion of education focuses here. How can pupils be taught to use their own minds and develop originality? How can they be persuaded to renounce cramming and question-spotting? How can all those who govern schools, colleges, and universities be made to acknowledge that examination results are not an end but a comparatively unimportant by-product of education? How can students be persuaded to love learning for its own sake and not for the job that getting a degree may obtain for them? In the most important sense discussion of education is fruitless: fruitless because all the arrangements (that are the subject-matter of such discussion) are so often nullified at the one point to which the arrangements are directed —that is, the meeting of the minds of pupil and teacher where the intellect is trained.

The intellect... the intellect... the intellect. *That* is what universities exist for. Everything else is secondary. Equality of opportunity to come to the university is secondary. The need to mix classes, nationalities, and races together is secondary. The agonies and gaieties of student life are secondary. So are the rules, customs, pay, and promotion of the academic staff and their debates on changing the curricula or procuring facilities for research. Even the awakening of a sense of beauty or the life-giving shock of new experience, or the pursuit of goodness itself—all these are secondary to the cultivation, training, and exercise of the intellect. Universities should hold up for admiration the intellectual life. The most precious gift they have to offer is to live and work among books or in laboratories and to enable the young to see those rare scholars who have put on one side the world of material success, both in and outside the university, in order to study with single-minded devotion some topic because that above all seems important to them. A university is dead if the dons cannot in some way communicate to the students the struggle—and the disappointments as well as the triumphs in that struggle—to produce out of the chaos of human experience some grain of order won by the intellect. That is the end to which all the arrangements of the university should be directed. And it is because so often the administration of the university seems to be, and at times is, directed towards the achievement of secondary aims—the secondary goals which the different departments and groups and interests within the university set up—that the hackles of the dons rise.

So when Butterfield tells us to stand against creeping bureaucracy he is nicking a sensitive nerve. It would have been a fine stroke if he had here been able to push his argument further and lay the failings in university education at the door of a body of powerful university administrators engaged in frustrating the ideals of the dons. Unfortunately he has to admit that, as in Britain (unlike America) the dons administer themselves, it is those who teach and research themselves that are betraying education. Still, the needle has been insinuated and the notion that education and research are being sacrificed for the convenience of administrators is comforting and well calculated to rally opinion in defence of academic freedom.

YET IF WE LOOK BACK once more at the age of Victorian reform we see how again and again reform arose out of administrative enquiries undertaken to resolve situations which the public—or at any rate the clerisy—could no longer endure. They were far less the brain-children of Benthamites or of men working under the spell of seers such as Carlyle or Ruskin than of civil servants, public officials, philanthropists, and politicians trying to resolve log-jams

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that were endangering society. Whether we like it or not the problems that universities face to-day have to be expressed in administrative terms; and the longer we look at them the more they seem to spring from terrible administrative defects. They are defects which are defended by citing axioms that are no longer axiomatic.

IT IS AN AXIOM that universities should have complete control over the admission of students. It is for them to choose to admit this student rather than that and to decree what academic standard he must obtain as a condition of entry. As the universities are attached to no administrative structure below them, they operate as if the Ministry of Education, the headmasters' conferences and associations, the associations of "subject" masters, and other institutions of higher education did not exist. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors offers its opinion that two A Levels and *Use of English* at A Level ought to be regarded as a minimum requirement for entry to a university. The Secondary Schools Examination Council (which loosely co-ordinates the various independent examining boards of G.C.E. which are in turn vestigially controlled by the universities they represent) thinks that two A Levels *tout court* should be a sufficient qualification. There is no machinery for bringing the Vice-Chancellors and S.S.E.C. together, nor for working out an agreed scheme with the headmasters of the Headmasters' Conference or the Incorporated Association of Head Masters.

Even if an agreed scheme were worked out, the massed dons of Oxbridge would most probably vote it down. Even more ludicrous, the agreed scheme would be at once nullified in *every* university. For in fact it is not *university* entrance requirements which bedevil the curricula of the schools. It is the requirements of colleges and departments *within* the universities—whose activities the universities affect not to notice. It is they that insist that no one can read history unless he has A Level French and Latin; or science unless three or four scientific A Levels. No wonder Russian makes little progress in the schools when the whole humanities teaching (for scientists as well as arts specialists) has to be geared to producing qualifications in French *and* Latin. No wonder the schools plead for minority time in the Sixth Form when departments press for more and more qualifications.

Then there is the maze of procedures and exam curricula that admit boys to the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. It is false to represent the choice of candidates made by admissions tutors as corrupt; with few exceptions they are not searching for Blues or potential pious benefactors. Their choice reflects the national system of education and the advantage which public schoolboys obtain from smaller classes and better equipment. But the chaos of the system—the waste of time and energy in both Oxbridge and the schools, the disregard by the colleges of interests other than their own parochial determination to get the best entry, the refusal in most cases to hold one instead of two examinations—is fantastic. Academic freedom certainly consists in universities being free to admit this candidate and reject that. But it cannot be cited in defence of the present lack of system; and it would not be surprising if a socialist government decreed that each type of school, independent, direct grant and L.E.A. maintained, should be allotted a quota of places at each university allocated on the percentage of sixth formers studying in each type of school—much as the grammar schools would resent such a proposal.

IT HAS AGAIN for long been axiomatic that universities should be free to decide what they teach, how to teach it, and what research should flourish within their walls. But this axiom is no longer self-evidently true. A very high proportion of research in universities is financed from outside sources—those sources that Butterfield finds so sinister. In science the main agencies are the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Medical Research Council, and the Agricultural Research Council. The men who control these bodies are not ignorant civil servants or philistine industrialists. They are in fact for the most part brilliant and original university scientists, and many of the research units and projects that they have sponsored have turned out to have made the most exciting advances. The scientific councils, however, set up a tension within universities. They want to start new lines of research and expect after five years or so the universities to take them over. The universities, cramped for floor-space and crimped for money, cannot afford to take them over unless the U.G.C. gives them larger grants to do so: or rather they are unwilling to suppress departments or lines of research already long established in order to provide funds for the novelties.

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The late Victorian axioms made no provision for such an operation as suppressing a department. They belonged to the age of Newtonian physics. Departments were regarded as solid and indestructible as atoms. To-day we know that scientific departments are highly fissile and the rate at which they break up into sub-departments each clamouring for men and equipment is a fact that dons have yet to learn how to live with. But if most of the cells of the organism multiply, some of them die—and there are only the most cumbersome and embarrassing arrangements for removing the corpses. University administrators make singularly bad undertakers. To suppress a department is the most difficult of all operations in the university.[3] Which universities have studied methods of controlling the conception of scientific departments? Which plan to inter the moribund? What happens to-day is that the rejuvenating forces come too much from outside the university and are not built into its structure. But it will not do to argue that rejuvenation from outside is an evil.

THE SITUATION IS quite otherwise in the humanities and social sciences. They have to rely for staff and funds on what the U.G.C. allocates their university. Directly after the war, the Clapham and Scarbrough Reports drew attention to the fact that the social sciences and Slavonic and Oriental studies were languishing for lack of funds. The U.G.C. accordingly gave grants to universities earmarked for these fields, but in accordance with the recommendations of the Reports leaving the universities to implement the policies. The universities—with some notable exceptions, *e.g.*, in London—responded as might have been expected. The well-established social sciences—economics or politics or economic history—got the lion's share; the struggling infants, such as sociology, were lucky if they got skimmed milk. The entrenched linguists set up posts in Middle Persian and Mandarin Chinese; but the hope that some students might learn the living languages and cultures of Asia and Africa died—it died so desperately that ten years later the U.G.C. set up another Committee under Sir William Hayter to conduct a post-mortem and to perform a miracle of resurrection. Meanwhile the universities had let it be known that they disliked ear-marked grants as a form of concealed coercion—and such grants have never been heard of again.[4]

The U.G.C. lets it be known that it will be willing to provide funds for some new project, but it intimates that the university concerned must make the necessary financial and administrative adjustments to enable the new development to be carried forward in the years to come. Unless the new project is closely geared to some sectional interest or another it will never be born. Perhaps this picture is over-painted. It is true that universities which are expanding and are therefore being granted money to expand will have less difficulty in finding room for new subjects or research projects than those which are not. But the crunch always comes when a department has to choose between strengthening its established lines of teaching and research (which must be strengthened if it is to teach more students) and introducing a new subject; or when it weighs the need for more staff against better facilities, new equipment or more laboratory or secretarial assistants for the existing staff.

IT IS, OF COURSE, an axiom that a university is composed of these faculties and departments, most of which offer separate courses leading to an honours degree. Indeed, one of the most formidable axioms bequeathed by the late Victorian reformers was that such departmentalism guaranteed that universities would not become infected by vocational studies. Universities, it was argued, existed to train students in the discipline of a recognised branch of scholarship. A new branch was recognised only if its standards of scholarship could measure up to those of the old branches. In fact the axiom rested on a fallacy. The fallacy sprang from the failure to remember that every branch of learning at one time trained men in a general way for a vocation. In the 16th century, Latin and Greek were studied to re-discover the long lost (and therefore modern) knowledge concealed in the writings of the ancients. Theology, medicine, and law were all vocational yet at

[3] It is genuinely difficult. Dons resemble civil servants in that they hold their posts to a retiring age; and the system of filling posts as they become vacant, particularly when those posts are attached to a teaching programme, tends to become automatic.

[4] Professor Butterfield tells us that it gave him a "peculiar tingle" when he heard Mr. R. A. Butler in a speech gravely bidding the heads of the universities of many nations not to surrender the autonomy of universities; but he does not tell us whether he thinks that Butler betrayed this principle when he reinforced the study of criminology at Cambridge with a special grant of public money which resulted in this subject at last finding a place in the undergraduate curriculum.

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the same time scholarly subjects. History and natural science, introduced in the 19th century, were both finally recognised as scholarly disciplines in their own right but the former was praised as an education for the statesmen of the future and the latter as a tool by which Nature could be mastered. There is no need for elaborate defences to be raised against vocational courses in universities. Give any subject to a don and you can guarantee that he will make it academic —in other words he will deduce the general principles that govern it, establish its methodology and literature, and sub-divide its subject-matter. The criteria by which Professor Butterfield favours the expulsion of chemical engineering on the grounds that it is a vocational subject yet applauds the retention of law which (as taught in England) is the most flagrantly vocational of all traditional subjects, remain mysterious.

AT FIRST SIGHT undergraduates to-day appear to be much more aware than their predecessors were that a degree is a vocational asset, but in pre-war days the link between preferment in a profession and the class obtained in a particular subject often existed. It existed for the prospective don or teacher. It existed for the priest or public servant. When the Trevelyan-Northcote report was at last implemented, and competitive examination governed entry to the foreign and civil service, the examination was not specially designed for public service. It was set on subjects which the applicants would have studied at the university, and the First in classics or in history was asked to repeat his performance in the civil service exam if he was to have a chance of gaining a place. This test of ability has now been accepted by business and industry who seem to be startled to find that proficiency in a specialist subject is not an infallible guide to financial and organising ability. There is no reason why it should be, still less why university courses should be designed to help business select its personnel. Nevertheless if there is practically no correspondence between the studies of undergraduates and the skills that they need later in life, the university is betraying, not defending, its role. The fact that Peter Marris deduces that the tension has become acute in students' minds between looking on their studies as a general education or scholarly discipline and looking at them as a preliminary to a career suggests that all is not well. There should be a tension, indeed there always has been; but the discrepancy between the two goals should not gape as wide as it does.

FIFTY YEARS AGO the departmental honours course was still broad enough for the able student to relate what he learnt, often unconsciously, to the modes of discussion in the world at large. It is seldom so to-day. Not only learning but the techniques of establishing truth have become specialised. The most notorious effect of departmentalism is that it has pushed specialisation deep down into the schools. What this does to school education is well known; what is sometimes forgotten is what it does to university education. Many boys and girls are often studying at school what they find they have to study in the first years at the university. They already know about Dr. G. R. Elton's revolution in Tudor government or Professor H. R. Trevor-Roper's analysis of the 17th-century gentry. As a result the departments jack up the standards for entry even higher. Professor B. Thwaites at Southampton is campaigning against the attitude of mathematics faculties which, finding that clever undergraduates have already covered part of the curriculum at school, make their courses even more esoteric so that none but the highest of mathematicians can attempt them, and are then surprised that the schools cannot find mathematics teachers. Meanwhile the departments, always anxious to increase the number of their staff, insist that students must study every aspect of the subject. Every student of science must have done routine titration in the lab; his course is planned on the assumption that he will later research—though in fact only a fraction do so. Although biological subjects are becoming more and more susceptible to the techniques of physics and chemistry, how many undergraduates studying physics do biology, or biologists mathematics?

THE REMEDY FOR departmentalism is not to force every honours student to do a general degree. The worst syllabus is that which consists of snippets and outline courses and the student who is most lost is the one who does not know what subject he is really studying. Nor is it to abolish every departmental course in all universities, and to substitute general courses with vague emphasis on a major subject. Although some students coming from schools with a poor Sixth Form record or students of lower ability need more broadly based studies, and although even the best students could benefit if depart-

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mental studies included papers set on allied disciplines, the departmental course should still retain its place in *some* universities and for some students. But we need variety in courses just as we need more variety than we have got in types of universities; and the departmental course at present tyrannises the Sixth Forms. The remedy for excessive specialisation lies in the hands of the universities. They have the power to alter and vary their entrance requirements. But this they cannot do unless they abandon another assumption implicit in the Victorian reforms. This is the assumption that as much knowledge as possible must be crammed into the undergraduate course and that postgraduate study is reserved specifically for the embryo don or the student from overseas seeking a professional qualification. The cure lies in expanding our graduate schools.

For it follows that the more you innovate, the more you try to introduce inter-disciplinary subjects, the more you are going to find excluded what should not have been excluded. If we are to lighten the load upon the undergraduate of sheer acquisition of knowledge and techniques, the better second-class men as well as the outstanding students must be allowed to stay on for further study. This means that we must extend the range of studies in graduate schools and the range of students according to their capacity. Some may work for the Ph.D. and attend seminars; but graduate work should also mean rounding off the undergraduate course and working for a one-year exam such as that excellent Oxford innovation the B.Phil.

The demand for university places is so desperate that all undergraduates cannot study for four years; but the more first degree students there are, the more varied the courses and types of first degree we establish, and the more postgraduate work will have to be extended. We are bound to move closer to an American pattern of higher education, and even if we need not imitate American undergraduate curricula or the long-drawn-out ritual of the Ph.D., we could study American graduate schools with profit. It is there that their students catch up with ours and work with an intensity that puts many of our Ph.D. students to shame. Unless graduate schools expand, our undergraduate courses can never improve.

IT IS THE POWER of departmentalism that the new universities are trying to break. The new universities excite much interest; but the really interesting experiment that they are conducting is an experiment in university organisation—an experiment they believe to be crucial for both teaching and research. They are trying to break the hegemony of the independent departments—self-perpetuating, self-contained, erecting their own fortresses in the shape of tailor-made buildings—by integrating them in Schools of Study and indeed by trying to prohibit them from forming. But are there at the moment many signs that the established universities are preparing to cure the administrative malaises that excessive departmentalism creates? Are there even any signs that they are going to respond to the Royal Society's plea to departmentalise biology?

Anyone, however, who considers how the internal government of universities can be reformed to deal with these problems should begin from a premise put forward by Sir Eric Ashby. A university, Ashby argues, cannot be run as a business because decisions are not taken at the top and passed down to be implemented at the bottom. On the contrary: the decisions concerning education and research which really matter must be taken by those who themselves teach and research, and the bureaucracy at the top exists only to make the task of departments easier by reconciling conflicting interests. If any vice-chancellor told his colleagues how they were to conduct their research and teaching, they would be justified in having him certified. This is why there is at present discontent in the civic universities where non-professorial staff have little or no representation on Senate. The constitution of these universities for the most part followed that which Manchester adopted in the first decade of this century at a time when the vast majority of the staff were professors; but despite the fact that the staffs have grown since then so that they now greatly out-number the professors they remain disinherited.

Nevertheless the professoriate still resists the movement to give the younger members of the staff a chance to take part in public discussion or a voice in decision-making. And that voice needs to be heard not on egalitarian grounds but because the best ideas in teaching and research so often come from the young.

OLIGARCHIC THOUGH IT may be, the structure of civic universities at any rate permits decisions to be taken—and taken quickly. The democracies of Oxford and Cambridge resemble the descriptions of the Polish Diet. The colleges are

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independent of the university and independent of each other; and every decision of the central bodies of the university can be brought to a vote by the resident dons. The agonies of paralysis produced by this system have to be experienced to be believed, and only those who have suffered in trying to effect even minute changes can do justice to the description of a system which might have been planned to perpetuate a state of civil war in which no side can ever win. What is excellent is the number of dons who are consulted and enjoy their responsibility to criticise. What is bad is the inability, or the unwillingness, to take unpleasant decisions which are left to central committees with shifting membership.

In practice common sense prevents the cumbersome machine from grinding to a halt. But the pace is exceedingly slow. As at Cambridge an important piece of business will have to be sent to faculties or colleges for their comments —and as obtaining these comments may take at least a term—and as the central bodies do not meet in vacations—and as no controversial issue can be put to the university vote between the middle of May and the middle of October, one has to be pretty nippy at the beginning of an academic year in putting forward a proposal if a decision is to be taken before the year is out. If only to deal with building programmes, where hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money are being spent, some reform of internal administration is vital.

But it is vital for other reasons. At present Oxford and Cambridge embitter the civic universities and irritate Whitehall. They resist attempts to integrate them into a national system of higher education and are for ever pleading that their system of internal government depending on the votes of the dons and the fiats of independent colleges absolve them from the obligation to fit in with other universities. They argue that they cannot be expected to give consistent answers because they have no strong central direction. They are already envied for their beauty, their national and international prestige, their independent sources of finance, their powerful lobby and the magnetic attraction that they are able to exert upon staff and students. If they are not to bring down upon themselves the accumulating wrath of their colleagues they must overhaul their system of administration.

FINALLY, THERE IS the axiom that, whatever the internal government of a university may be, it alone has the right to develop any branch of learning that it sees fit. But can this freedom continue to be interpreted as it has been in the past when the money for development is handed out by the U.G.C. which is adjudicating between hundreds of bids put forward by the departments of all universities? With seven new universities being founded and most civic universities expanding, with colleges of advanced technology, technical colleges, and teachers' training colleges all multiplying and expanding, there is not conceivably going to be enough money available to allow all universities to study all subjects effectively. Nor are there going to be enough men of distinction in every field to make such a dream come true.

Another axiom of the Victorian reforms is to-day looking less like an axiom—the Idea of a University as a place where all subjects and disciplines rub shoulders. The tyranny of the Idea is very real. We plan even our new universities broadly on the subject-pattern of the old. Yet there is no reason why a university has to offer all the traditional subjects—they don't in America nor do the *Grandes Ecoles* in France. And if it is true that every subject is becoming each decade more and more fissile as learning sets off the chain reaction of new kinds of knowledge, what alternative is there but to declare that at this particular university certain subjects will *not* be studied? If this is not done the universities will consist of numbers of small departments few of which will have the resources in men and money to conduct efficient research. Circumstances have in fact dictated that some subjects such as nuclear physics are zoned. But at present no one has the power to undertake a review of the curriculum of all universities to see whether in fact some subjects could be concentrated in two or three universities leaving others to a further two or three. The U.G.C. understandably still clings to its original brief that its duty is to disburse public funds for which the universities are free to bid. There is no superstructure to university administration any more than there is an infrastructure.

HOW FAR THE Robbins Committee will make recommendations on the administrative matters discussed above is doubtful. What is beyond doubt is that they will have to make recommendations about the superstructure of higher education of which the universities are only a part. The spectrum of higher studies

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is wide. If we omit all the research units which work for the Ministry of Defence, there are the numerous out-stations of the Research Councils very few of whose scientists are engaged in teaching, and who ultimately through the Councils fall under the wing of the Lord President of the Council. There are the universities financed mainly through the U.G.C. by a Treasury grant but also dependent for research grants on the Research Councils and other outside bodies. Then there are the institutions of further education under the Minister of Education, the C.A.T.s, the Technical Colleges, and the Teachers' Training Colleges. The expansion of higher education must be so great, and the expenditure so vast, that some co-ordination and formal public control of funds is inevitable.

This is why the original proposal put forward by Professor Stephen Toulmin and others that these matters could be solved if only universities charged realistic fees seems to me to be unrealistic. The argument—if I follow it correctly—seems to be that the cost of a university at present met by a block grant from the U.G.C. could be met by raising fees (which on all sides are admitted to have no reasoned basis) to £1,200–£1,500 a year per student. The fees would be paid in effect by the State and Local Authorities. The universities would be free within these limits to organise such studies and research as they saw fit and a healthy degree of competition to produce attractive and challenging curricula would be introduced. At the same time the universities would be freed from control by bureaucrats who never can know what ventures in which university merit support. The proposal appears to ignore the fact that there already exists a peck-order in universities; that the flexibility which it seeks to introduce will be nullified by the administrative diseconomies referred to above; and that the universities, no more than hospitals or schools, can no longer be left in our mixed economy unaccountable financially to Parliament or to some government agency.

For once university education comes to be regarded not as a privilege for a small élite, but as *part* of a large-scale venture in higher education for 20 per cent of the adolescent population by the end of the century, a number of consequences follow. It used to be argued that the universities benefited by being outside the ministerial structure in that they escaped the Treasury chopper. Few dons who have seen their scale of stipends decline in the last decade can to-day be so optimistic. Some of them now pin their hopes in the creation of a Ministry of High Studies—of Cabinet rank or in a Minister of Education, who would certainly be of Cabinet rank, with under him two Ministers of State (one for higher studies and one for schools). It may well be that the word, "Ministry," will be avoided as calculated to give offence; but some agency will surely be created under which the universities will fall. Whatever recommendation the Robbins Committee makes will be attacked. The Ministry of Education will not wish to surrender the teachers' training colleges that are geared to produce teachers for the schools, nor will they like to see their prize animals, such as the C.A.T.s, removed from their control. At the other end of the spectrum the Research Councils will pray to be kept out of a ministerial orbit and retain their independence under the Lord President on the grounds that if their grant gets merged in a block grant to higher education, research will be sacrificed time and again to the need for buildings and equipment for teaching. On the other hand the universities will look jealously at the out-stations of the Research Councils and see in them a potential supply of desperately needed scientific teachers; and they will argue with justice that these scientists could spare one or even two days to teach research students and undergraduates in term time without their research being impaired.

YET ALTHOUGH a ministerial superstructure may introduce priorities and co-ordination where none now exists, it can do little unless the internal administration of the universities themselves is changed. And it is difficult to see how such a change can come about without a revolution in the way that dons look at their job.

The amount of time that is spent in academic rituals is astonishing. They are the rituals connected with examining undergraduates or students for the Ph.D., M.A., diplomas, and certificates in advanced study; in admitting students; in faculty and college committees; in academic conferences; in discussing buildings, amenities, and sitting on dozens of other boards and sub-committees. There are sacrosanct concepts such as the academic year of three terms beginning and ending on holy dates; there are untouchable vigils and inviolable festivals. It is assumed that a new laboratory has to be planned in detail to fit the exact requirements of the present professor: even though all experience

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shows that such a laboratory will be out-of-date in twenty-five years. Vast lecture halls rise as if the lecture must for ever be the basic method of instructions. Halls of residence are built to perpetuate a ritual of student existence that is no longer appropriate to undergraduates of today. Whether it is in bricks and mortar or in academic arrangements, we plan for eternity even though we ought by now to know that buildings with movable partitions and flexible arrangements that create a minimum of vested interests should be our transient goal.

Nothing could be more likely to do good than for each faculty or college to set up one more committee whose duty would be to free their colleagues from as much administrative work as possible so that they could devote themselves to research and teaching; and nothing is less likely to occur.

IT IS UNLIKELY TO OCCUR because Britain is sick of a governmental disease. Again and again observers at home and from other countries diagnose a failure of nerve in our political life. Our diplomacy is feeble; our financial policy is neither one thing nor another and negates our policy for industrial expansion; whether it is the problem of conurbation, town planning, roads and railways, the organisation of industry, the priorities in social welfare, the working of local government, or almost any branch of public activity, we seem to be unable to move fast enough to keep up with the rate at which the impersonal forces of history are changing.

We have perfected a system of government and the system is pressing us to death. That system is democracy through committee. It is superficial to talk of a lack of leadership or of the psychological barrier to accepting and operating in the post-war world. The engine turns over sweetly, the wheels revolve, but the vehicle fails to move: the committees are convened, they report back, the conveners object, the committees reconsider, the public is consulted, every view and every interest is weighed—and in the process the goals become dim—until as the years pass they change their shape so palpably that the committees have to begin their task anew.

In the universities this disease is exacerbated by a complication. We govern ourselves in our spare time. The first duty of a don is to teach and research. The arguments nearest our heart are those which arise in research or in the curriculum. Most of us at some stage get sucked into administration and sit on committees for a few years, but we acquire the knack of swimming to the edge of the whirlpool and clambering on to dry shore to return to our true vocation. A few become committee men for good, but even they work at it half-time and continue at least to teach and examine. They have no time to examine major problems—they have to run hard to stand in the same place. Hardly anyone has begun to consider how considerably larger numbers of students are going to be taught by staffs little larger than the present size; and those who advocate expansion of higher education up to date have not made many practical suggestions.

I am not advocating that a horde of hard-headed and over-precise bureaucrats should be brought in to run the universities. But if the dons themselves are to continue to control their affairs a few of them must sacrifice their careers to analyse how the organism in which they live could be rejuvenated or how its ailments could be palliated.

IT HAS, OF COURSE, always been fashionable to diagnose the ailments as spiritual disorders. There is no end to books that proclaim a crisis in the universities which springs from lack of faith, or insufficient humanism, or the chasm which looms between two or more cultures. These are the terms in which a few wise men, and many charlatans, have accustomed us to discuss universities. And yet much as society always is in want of a great critic, to insist that the machinery of academic life needs refurbishing is not philistine. For the late Victorian axioms are cracking. It is as if a Lobachewsky or a Goedel were destroying the old foundations of geometry and arithmetic. It is not late Victorian axioms but late Victorian administrators that we need—men such as Morant or Simon who can convince the vested interests where their true interests lie and who will satisfy Dr. Arnold's criterion that "no one ought to meddle with the universities that does not know them well and love them well."

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Two Poems

Sestina

You must never unlock the cedar closet;
Nor open the white doors to the music room
To be stared at by the French windows and drained
Flabby by the sucking mouths of pastel plants
Unseasonably bred, denatured, deformed.
There in the corner crouches the piano

That vibrates pianissimo piano
And crescendoes con amore in the closet
Of your mind, there by the agons of time deformed
And dimmed, but resonating, leaving no room
For any theme but dread. Behind the white doors plants
Alone were smiled at, but with joyless pride that drained

Odour and pollen. That indifference drained
The marrow from the bones of the piano,
Gutted the child, but watered the tuneless plants.
Only camphored clothing hangs in the closet,
No souvenir, no clue to another room—
Clothes sealed in paper and tidily deformed.

Go away. Do you think you can be deformed
Only once in the same way, that once drained
You cannot be drier? Play the piano
Louder than the echoes of pain but the room
With the staring windows will again closet
You with the chords of terror and the deaf plants.

O multiply impotent is she who plants
Her target heel on thresholds so deformed
By strangled battles that the air is drained
Of sustenance as a sealed up closet,
Or, as the tense unplucked strings of a piano.
Step back. There is blood in the music room.

Totem's whistle skirled and dwindled in this room
Of slaughter. Rosily embalmed the corpse-plants
Frill the bald windows back of the piano.
The keyboard makes faces at the most deformed
Of all, at her who snail-wise wears her closet
On her back: the leech by which her veins are drained.

Drained child, child still, you are buried in this room,
Embalmed like the plants, hanging in the closet,
Muted in hate as the piano, and deformed.

Isabella Gardner

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The World Situation

I went out to meet the world,
My heart was light and gay.
The world turned grey and sour,
I had to flesh my fangs.

It was the inner imagination
I served. It was a purity of life
My innocence thought was tantamount
To the whole turmoil of strife.

I thought man had an honesty
Precluding malice. I felt the chill
Cold calculation of his evil,
The malevolence of his will.

In the force of my contention
I became a battleground.
Freedom, I cried, freedom of soul and light
And flailed my arms around

Until I quieted and pointed them hard
At my heart. There is your enemy,
There is the world's disparity.
Your better knew it in Gethsemane

I cried, whole decades of life
Filled with reality and brimstone.
I wanted to change the world.
My will was seated in the bone.

I could not change the world without,
I could not change the world within.
I live and breathe in a mortal quest,
Without, a dilemma; a red richness within.

II

Down in deep wells of consciousness
I fought the battle of mankind.
When I thought I saw the way
Then I was most blind.

I figured I could win
In the thickets of insurrection
By wit, decision and the volatile
The enemy banner's defection.

My assault was brutal and severe—
The forces joined were blue and grey.
My heart had a red force,
I fought all night and all day.

I fought for weeks, for years, a life.
I fought the battle of mankind,
Locked in a mortal embrace,
Seeing best when I was blind,

For then in deepest feeling alone
I felt the mighty assaults and defeats
Of man's struggle with the world,
His soul's flights, his animal heats,

The tragedy of his essence,
His agony and his pain,
The fury of the situation,
Man's follies that are vain.

I arose from meditation saying
In all this stupendous play
Let a little love into the picture,
Red love, at dawn, both light and gay.

III

Love appeared when killing most
Employed men locked in mortal harms.
They shed each other's blood
Locked in each other's arms,

Dealing death. The Devil laughed,
Giving them evil. They lusted after
Death and loved the Devil
And therefore loved their own disaster.

I saw them struggling on the plain,
Their bodies locked in bloody brightness,
A clotted mass, man in his essence,
To savagery gone, and mental lightness.

Then, as obscurely as fighting and the rest,
Love appeared over the horizon
In the form of woman, as redeemer,
Radiant in the sun's warming orison.

It was unbelievable but true
That the glory of this sight
Appeased the beast in man
And made him not fierce to fight.

He held to the glory of the world,
Colour, tone, propensity, desire
When love entered into his heart,
Kindling compassionate fire.

He defeated evil, death, and battle
In love redeeming the human flesh,
Reddest love, innocent and experiential,
Which grows and fructifies the human wish.

Richard Eberhart

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Machine Politics

Walter Bagehot (II) — By R. H. S. Crossman

OUR SECOND QUESTION—whether Bagehot was a reliable observer of his own times—can be answered far more competently by the professional historians than by a practical politician. Bagehot has had his English critics but none of them, I think, with one notable exception, has suggested that the general outline and main features of the picture he paints are untrue to life. That this view is not shared by American political scientists is natural enough, since the references to the American Presidential system are far the most unsatisfactory part of the whole book. Rather surprisingly, he never visited the United States; and this may explain both the uncritical praise he lavishes on American literacy and living standards, and the complacency with which he finds everything wrong with Presidential government. As an account of American politics, *The English Constitution* was superficial and unreliable when it was written, and its judgments have not been improved by the passage of time.[1]

Apart from the American critics who have objected to Bagehot's references to the United States, there is one modern English writer who has sharply challenged his accuracy. Of recent years, L. S. Amery is one of the very few 20th-century politicians who have made a serious contribution to political science. In the lectures he delivered shortly after the war, he argued that, despite Bagehot's peremptory dismissal of it as a myth, the traditional theory of the separation between the executive and the legislature still held good in important aspects; and he went on to question[2] whether—even in the 1860s—it was in any way true that either the Premier or the Cabinet was "elected" by the House of Commons.

> More serious in its consequences . . . was the misreading of the essential nature of our Constitution in the last century by writers of the dominant Liberal individualist school, of whom Bagehot was the typical or, at least, most popular exponent. Interpreting the parliamentary situation of their own time in the light of their general prepossessions, they persuaded themselves that our Constitution had, in fact, become what they thought it ought to be, namely a system based on the delegation of authority by the electorate to a Parliament which, in its turn, delegated the day-by-day exercise of that power to a Cabinet which was, in substance, only a committee—to use Bagehot's phrase—of the parliamentary majority. That reinterpretation . . . became the prevalent text-book theory, and still colours most current journalistic and political phraseology.

As a criticism of the way in which Bagehot's account of the Cabinet has been accepted, lock, stock, and barrel, and transformed into a venerable tradition, Mr. Amery's lectures have much to commend them. It is true that Bagehot's main discovery was progressively falsified after 1867—and the falser it became the more eagerly it was expounded as established truth. But I believe that *The English Constitution* remains an accurate and vivid account of how Cabinet government worked *before* the extension of the suffrage, *before* the creation of the party machines, and *before* the emergence of an independent Civil Service administering a vast welfare state.

One reason why Bagehot has been consistently misunderstood and misinterpreted is the fact that the system he described is so remote from our experience. It is, indeed, difficult to re-create even in imagination the parliamentary politics of the 1860s, which had much more in common with those of the French Assembly under the Third Republic than with any 20th-century British Parliament. Governments suffered frequent defeats without resignation; ministries were made and unmade without dissolution; and private business was at least as important as public business. Most important of all, the sense of the House usually counted for more than party feeling.

[1] President Woodrow Wilson was a devotee of Bagehot, and particularly admired *The English Constitution*. But what he enjoyed surely was Bagehot's description of British conditions, and in particular his distinction between the dignified and the efficient parts of the Constitution.

[2] *Thoughts on the Constitution*, by L. S. Amery (2nd edition, 1953, p. 13).

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A succinct picture of the weakness of party discipline in this period has been given by Sir Gilbert Campion in his admirable summary of "Parliamentary Government" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He tells us, for example, that between 1851 and 1860 the government imposed the whip in about two out of three divisions. But by modern standards the whipping was normally not very effective. Indeed the "True Party Divisions"—*i.e.*, divisions in which nine-tenths of government supporters obeyed the whip—formed only 16 per cent of the total in 1850, and sank to 6 per cent ten years later. No wonder that in the fifteen years between 1850 and 1865 the government was defeated on an average of ten times in each session, without resigning! This occurred on twelve occasions when Lord John Russell was Premier in 1865; and almost as often in the early 1860s when Lord Palmerston was in power and at the height of his prestige. If Mr. Amery had called to mind the actual conditions Bagehot was describing, he would have seen that the House of Commons before 1867 still had such a decisive voice in the making and unmaking of ministers and ministries, that it was not absurd to describe it metaphorically as an electoral college, and to claim that its debates were listened to because it was the place where the most vital decisions were still taken.

It has also been suggested that Bagehot's description of "The Magic of Monarchy" was a brilliant anachronism—untrue when he wrote it but approximating very closely to 20th-century realities. Queen Victoria's letters, we are told, show that she played a far more active role in politics—usually against reforms—than Bagehot's theory suggested; and we are reminded that the national adulation of the royal family, whose utility Bagehot commended, really began after the Jubilee.

Such criticism, it seems to me, is the result of reading into *The English Constitution* the stereotype of "the retired widow and the unemployed youth" created by the famous first paragraph of the chapter on Monarchy. These words do not, as is so often assumed, summarise the pages that follow. Unlike his liberal imitators, who did fall into the error of writing off the Monarchy as a mere symbol, Bagehot knew very well that the Prince Consort had played a most important role in politics; and he assumed that, after Albert's death, the Queen was almost certainly continuing to interfere. "Among courtiers," he remarks, "it is an accepted secret doctrine that the Crown does more than it seems. But there is a wide discrepancy in opinion as to the quality of that action.... Now the best Liberal politicians say '*We* shall never know, but when history is written our children may know, what we owe to the Queen and Prince Albert.'" Later on he hints very clearly that the Prince of Wales, when in due course he became Edward VII, was likely to be a dangerous busybody undoing the good work that Albert had done through the Queen.

The truth is that, in distinguishing between the dignified and the efficient parts of the Constitution, Bagehot was far too acute an observer of the deliberate confusion in which British government functions to suggest that the separation was absolute. The House of Commons, he was careful to observe, is dignified as well as efficient; and the Monarch, from his unique vantage-point above the party fray, has the power to do untold good and untold harm. Nothing in Queen Victoria's letters, therefore, invalidates Bagehot's account of the role that she was playing in the 1860s. As we shall have seen, there was a flaw in Bagehot's image of the Monarchy, but his assessment of its power to influence practical politics was substantially correct when he wrote it and has remained so ever since.

It seems to me, therefore, that (apart from the deficiencies in its account of Presidential government) *The English Constitution* can still be read as the classical version of the classical period of parliamentary government. The secret which Bagehot claimed to have discovered does in fact provide the correct explanation of the relationship between the Commons and the Cabinet as it emerged between 1832 and 1867. In 1872, when the last chapter and the introduction to the second edition were added, the book was already badly out of date. But its texture was too close to permit of re-writing it; and he could defend the decision to leave the text unchanged, on the ground that Disraeli's extension of the suffrage had not yet produced changes in the Constitution clear and definite enough to require a new analysis.

The Sceptic in the Pantheon

It was not until well after Bagehot's death that the system was fundamentally transformed by the transfer of effective power from the floor of the Commons to the great party machines and the bureaucracy in Whitehall. I feel sure that if this consummate journalist had witnessed the election of 1884, when the countryside as well as the towns obtained the vote, he would have realised that, since the Commons was now ceasing to be the place of decision, he must look elsewhere for the efficient secret of the Constitution.

Yet this was the very period when *The English Constitution* was finally accepted, not only as the *locus classicus* for the mores of Whitehall and Westminster, but as the definitive and

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authoritative account of how, in a democracy, power is divided between the electorate, the Commons, and the Cabinet. Once he was safely dead and buried, the sceptic whose chief pleasure was the deflating of myths and the exposure of democratic pretensions was himself admitted to the literary establishment; and the book in which he achieved such an exact separation of political myth from political reality became a part of the dignified façade behind which a new "efficient secret" could operate, concealed from the masses. This absorption of Bagehot's anti-democratic analysis into the myth of democracy was not performed by the conservative opponents of change. It was a long line of radical theorists and left-wing reformers who wilfully misunderstood the lesson of *The English Constitution*, seeing it not as a model of how to pry behind the façade and observe the technique for denying the masses effective power, but as the classical account of how a British democracy does work and ought to work.

The most recent examples of this misreading are to be found in the writings of Harold Laski and Lord Morrison. In the last lectures he ever delivered, Laski rebuked Amery for daring to criticise Bagehot, and once again expounded the "efficient secret" as though it were a true account of what really happens, and not a hoary legend. "I see no danger," he writes, in his *Reflections on the Constitution* (1952), "to the supremacy of the House of Commons in the new phase of its long life upon which it has entered." And four pages later, we read: "The Cabinet remains, in essence, a committee of the party or parties with a majority in the House of Commons."

Despite Lord Morrison's dislike of socialist intellectuals, we find Laski's uncritical acceptance of Bagehot's analysis repeated in the few passages of *Government and Parliament*, where Lord Morrison tries to relate his practical experiences in the Cabinet to first principles. Both books are written on Bagehot's old assumption that real sovereignty still resides in the House of Commons, and that the Cabinet is still created by and still responsible to the Commons. Yet having made their obeisance to the democratic appearances, both Lord Morrison and Laski proceed to give us detailed descriptions of how Cabinet and Parliament have operated since the war, which show that these appearances no longer bear much relation to fact. Bagehot's ingenious and shocking revelation has become part of the respectable legend that now obscures the way in which power is really wielded and decisions are really taken in the modern state.

When Bagehot, for example, described the Commons as the place where "ministries are made and unmade" and Congress as the place where "the debates are prologues without a play," the contrast was valid because the House of Commons in the 1860s still enjoyed effective sovereignty. But the contrast has become less and less true, as the suffrage was extended in this country and the modern party system developed. The right to appoint the Prime Minister—which Bagehot and Mill agreed to be the most important constitutional power belonging to the Commons—was gradually removed from it and shared between the parties and the Monarch. And once it had lost its status as an "electoral college" the House of Commons began to lose its collective will and finally became merely the forum of debate between well-disciplined political armies. We had left the epoch of classical parliamentary government, and entered a new epoch of machine democracy.

Party & Parliament

THE GROWTH of the party machines was of course directly related to the extension of the suffrage that began in the year *The English Constitution* was published. Once votes became too numerous to buy, organised corruption was gradually replaced by party organisation; and the vote was purchased not with offers of ready cash but with promises of state benefits to come. The party which, up to now, had been a weak organisation, functioning informally in the lobbies and political clubs, now became a centralised, extra-parliamentary machine, constantly seeking to impose its discipline and its doctrine on the Member of Parliament as well as on the party worker. By the turn of the century, when the party caucuses were firmly entrenched, the efficient secret of the Constitution was no longer the fusion of the executive and the legislature, in that supreme committee of the House of Commons called the Cabinet, but the secret links that connected the Cabinet with the political parties on the one side and with the civil service on the other.

Of the modern party, Bagehot had not even a premonition—partly because he had never visited America where it was already dominant when he wrote. Throughout *The English Constitution*, he describes party organisation as weak at Westminster and almost non-existent outside. "At present the member is free," he remarks, "because the constituency is not in earnest; no constituency has an acute, accurate, doctrinal creed in politics." One of his main reasons for opposing an extension of the suffrage was his correct premonition that this would bring as its consequence a growth of constituency government, *i.e.*, party machines. "Constituency government," he observes, "is the precise opposite of Parliamentary government. It is the government of immoderate persons far from the

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scene of action, instead of the government of moderate persons close to the scene of action."

What he liked most about Parliament was the existence of a solid centre, composed of the majority of solid, sensible, independent M.P.s, collectively able to make and unmake ministries, to defy when necessary their own whips, and above all to frustrate the growth of "constituency government" outside. True, he emphasised the need for "party" under a system where the government has to sustain its majority in order to endure. But the kind of party organisation he wanted was more like a club than a modern machine. It will work well, he remarks, precisely "because it is not composed of warm partisans. The body is eager, but the atoms are cool. If it were otherwise, Parliamentary government would become the worst of governments—a sectarian government." By Bagehot's standards, therefore, Parliamentary government has long since ceased to exist in this country. Ever since the party machines took over the "electoral" powers previously exercised by the House of Commons, we have been living under "sectarian government."

The first impact of the modern mass party on classical parliamentary democracy was made by Joseph Chamberlain's Birmingham caucus. But it was not until the rise of working-class parties, based on trade unions and disciplined according to their canons of working-class solidarity, that the transformation of the system was completed. Until then, Parliament had been dominated by the middle classes, and parties had really been electoral organisations at the service of groups of M.P.s, still arguing within the social oligarchy. Though partially enfranchised, the working class were effectively though precariously excluded from government, which was still the monopoly of the aristocracy and the business community. When the Labour Party was formed at the beginning of the century, what Bagehot wrote (in the introduction to his second edition) was still largely true:

> The issue put before these electors was: Which of two rich people will you choose? And each of those rich people was put forward by great parties whose notions were the notions of the rich—whose plans were their plans. The electors only selected one or two wealthy men. . . . They were just competent to make a selection between two sets of superior ideas; or rather—for the conceptions of such people are more personal than abstract—between two opposing parties, each professing a creed of such ideas. . . . They were competent to decide an issue selected by the higher classes, but they were incompetent to do more.

The irruption into politics of the Labour Movement ended this phase. In order to break down the walls of social oligarchy which surrounded Parliament, a battering-ram was required and the Labour Party was created for this purpose. Its structure was determined by three conditions. First it had to have large funds at its disposal; hence the reliance on trade union financing which led to the sponsoring of Labour constituencies by particular unions. Secondly, since it could not afford, like its opponents, to maintain a large army of paid party-workers, the Labour Party required militants—politically conscious socialists to do the work of organising the constituencies. But since these militants tended to be "extremists," a constitution was needed which maintained their enthusiasm by apparently creating a full party democracy while excluding them from effective power. Hence the concession in principle of sovereign powers to the delegates at the Annual Conference, and the removal in practice of most of this sovereignty through the trade union block-vote on the one hand, and the complete independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the other. Thirdly, since its avowed aim was social revolution, the Labour Party from the first accepted the semi-military discipline of democratic centralism, based on the ruthless enforcement of majority decision. Hence the intolerance of minority opinion.

It was a Swiss social scientist, almost unacquainted with British politics, who first described the impact on Parliamentary democracy of political trade unionism. Robert Michels based his *Political Parties* on a close study of the German Social Democrats before World War I. Reissued recently in a paperback, much of it reads like a topical onslaught on the oligarchical structure of the modern Labour party. Michels' thesis is that all working-class parties are constructed in order to launch an assault upon oligarchy, and end by themselves becoming the tightest form of oligarchy. In any modern mass party, power tends to be concentrated in the hands of the parliamentarians, and the professional machine-politicians. In working-class parties this tendency, Michels claims, becomes an inevitable process operating according to "the law of increasing oligarchy." It is this law which explains the tendency of socialist politicians and trade union leaders to start on the left, attacking the old leadership as popular tribunes, and move to the right as they rise in the hierarchy.

The emergence of Labour as the alternative government had an important effect on its opponents. The Conservative Party was compelled in certain respects to copy it. Gradually it was transformed from an old-fashioned caucus, with old-fashioned electoral machinery,

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into a modern, carefully disciplined mass party. Inevitably the two great machines began to resemble each other. In his *British Political Parties*, Mr. Robert Mackenzie has described in great detail this process of approximation. In so doing he seems to me to have gravely underestimated the very real differences that still exist between the skilfully induced self-discipline of the Conservatives, and the monolithic discipline employed by the Labour Leadership. But his general thesis is undoubtedly correct, and represents the most important advance in the study of party government since Michels. He correctly portrays the British political scene as completely dominated by the two great party oligarchies, which have usurped and divided between themselves most of the sovereign powers Bagehot ascribed to the Commons.

What Has Changed?

IN ORDER to see the difference between his English Constitution and that under which we now live, it may be useful to summarise these changes.

1. The effect of party on the individual M.P. In Bagehot's day, the private member was genuinely free to defy the whip, genuinely responsible to his own conscience and his constituents, and genuinely free, within wide limits, to speak and vote as he wished. It was this independence of the private member that gave the Commons its collective character and made it the most important check on the executive. Now the prime responsibility of the member is no longer to his conscience or to the elector, but to his party. Without accepting the discipline of the party he cannot be elected; and, if he defies that discipline, he risks political death. Even forty years ago it was still possible to cross the floor and survive. But to-day the member who loses the whip may win the next election, but after that the party machine will destroy him. Party loyalty has become the prime political virtue required of an M.P., and the test of that loyalty is his willingness to support the official leadership when he knows it to be wrong.

One result of the virtual disappearance of the M.P.'s independence is that the point of decision has now been removed from the division lobby to the party meeting upstairs. The debate on the floor of the House becomes a formality, and the division which follows it a foregone conclusion. It is what is said and done in the secrecy of the party meeting which is now really important —though the public can only hear about it through "leaks to the press."

2. The effect of party on parliamentary control of the executive. Parliamentary control became a fiction with the disappearance of that solid centre of independent and independent-minded members on which Bagehot relied to mitigate the harshness of party government and ensure that it was always "mild." Once the party leadership runs a modern machine and can discipline its M.P.s, government control of Parliament and its business becomes absolute. The Commons, which in Bagehot's day had a real collective life and a general will, is split into two sectarian armies—the Cabinet with its phalanx of supporters, and the Shadow Cabinet also with its phalanx.

3. The effect of party on the task of Opposition. Theoretically, the task of checking and controlling the executive, which previously belonged in a real sense to the House as a whole, has now passed to the Opposition. But the Opposition is incapable of adequately fulfilling it. For with good management and even a moderate sized majority, any modern government can survive, whatever the Opposition may do, until the Prime Minister decides to dissolve. Modern Oppositions are often accused of ineffectiveness, and rebuked for shadow-boxing. But this is all they *can* do—unless they are willing over a period of months to obstruct legislation and so halt the process of government. But by taking opposition to this level, an Opposition lays itself open to the charge of extremism and irresponsibility, and may well lose the support of that mass of floating voters which it must hope to win in order to turn out the government. Hence the tendency of the Opposition Party to become not a fighting opposition but a safe, alternative government waiting for the pendulum to swing.

It is not the Opposition but the electorate whose views, as revealed in by-elections and gallup polls, the government solicitously watches, and is often ready to appease. Indeed the Opposition normally has less power to exert a check on the executive, or to modify government policy, than a dissident group on the government's back benches. The government knows that it could be undermined from inside by the dissident group, whereas it cannot be defeated by an attack across the floor from the opposite front bench. That is why a government tends to pay much more attention to the private approaches from its own back-benchers than it does to the public onslaught of the Opposition. For even if the Shadow Cabinet triumphs in the debates day after day, the Government knows that it cannot be brought down except by disloyalty among its own supporters. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that, at Westminster, more effective opposition can be exercised very often by dissident groups of Government supporters than by Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

4. The effect of party on the struggle for power. Just as the important debates have been

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removed from the floor of the Commons to the secrecy of the committee rooms upstairs, so the struggle for power which gives meaning to democratic politics has also been hidden from the public eye. To-day the struggle for real power takes place secretly inside the government party, and for shadow power inside the Opposition. Driven underground by the requirements of party discipline, it is normally a conspiratorial matter of cliques and cabals. Groups are formed to fight for causes or uphold principles against the expediency of the leadership, only to be disintegrated from above by threats of expulsion and offers of preferment. In our modern party politics, there is no "loyal" way either of removing a disastrous leader or of promoting to power a saviour at loggerheads with the machine.

In the classical parliamentary system, the debates were public, the issues were known, and the personal struggle for power could take place on the floor of the House or on the hustings. The elector could see something at least of the issues at stake in the clash of personalities. In our modern system, all he can usually see is the shadow fight between the selected champions of the two party phalanxes on the floor of the chamber. Of the struggle between personalities and the conflict of ideas that take place inside each great party machine, he can only hear the garbled versions leaked to the press by interested parties. Thus he can never know for certain why a Cabinet has been suddenly reconstructed, why a policy defended for years is now dropped, and what importance should really be attached to the various items in a programme. Politics is inevitably personified and simplified in the public mind into a battle between two super-leaders—appointed for life—or until they are removed by intra-party *coup d'état*.

5. *The effect of party on ministerial responsibility*. So long as parties were little more than electoral caucuses, the responsibility of the minister to Parliament was an important check on bureaucratic incompetence. If departments were bad, ministers could be sacked; if ministers disagreed with their colleagues, they could resign without losing caste. Now that the Government party controls Parliament, both resignations on principle and dismissals for incompetence have become rare. Indeed the incompetent minister with a departmental muddle to cover up may be kept in office for years; and the louder the demand for his dismissal, the more loyally the party oligarchy will usually support him, rightly calculating that more votes will be lost in a general election by admitting ministerial incompetence than by concealing it.

6. *The reduced role of Parliament*. The Commons still have a useful job to do. But to-day it is not very much more useful than the job allotted by Bagehot to the House of Lords. If the peers provide one reservoir from which governments are drawn, the House of Commons is still a much more important one. Though a Premier can co-opt an outsider to his Cabinet, anyone ambitious for a political career is still well-advised to obtain a seat in the Commons, and there to prove his suitability for high office by a longish period of safe party speeches and loyal adherence to the party line. In the sense that both Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet are steeped in parliamentary tradition, and manned overwhelmingly by loyal party men who are also loyal parliamentarians, we can still call our system of government "parliamentary democracy." We can still be proud of Question Time and of the work of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committees. We can still claim that even a government with a substantial majority must remain sensitive to the climate of parliamentary opinion. But the fact remains that in a period when effective power in all spheres of life—economic, social, political—is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, parliamentary control of the executive has been steadily decreasing, without being replaced by other methods of democratic control.

The danger into which we are drifting has been well described by one acute French observer. In his *Political Parties*, M. Maurice Duverger reminds us how far we have moved from the system described by Bagehot:

> Officially Great Britain has a parliamentary system . . . in practice the existence of a majority governing party transforms this constitutional pattern from top to bottom. The party holds in its own hands the essential prerogative of the legislature and the executive. . . . Parliament and Government are like two machines driven by the same motor—the party. The régime is not so very different in this respect from the single party system. Executive and legislature, government and parliament are constitutional façades: in reality the party alone exercises power

Cabinet & Civil Service

IN THIS PASSAGE, M. Duverger no doubt was being deliberately one-sided in order to point out a very real danger. What makes his description unbalanced is the existence of a second countervailing factor, rivalling that of the modern party, which was given just as little importance in *The English Constitution*. This factor is the vast apparatus of power and public service which the state now administers centrally and locally, and whose emergence Bagehot failed to foresee. As Parliament has been reduced to a new and more submissive role by the modern party machine, so the powers of the Cabinet have been eroded by the growing

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ascendancy of Whitehall. Bagehot, as we have seen, was profoundly suspicious of J. S. Mill's proposal to create an administrative *élite*, selected strictly by competitive public examination, which would take over the job of state-management. No business, he tells us, selects its personnel in this way. And though the argument for preserving patronage in the Civil Service sounds very American to-day, it seemed conclusive enough to a Victorian banker.

> The truth is that a skilled bureaucracy—a bureaucracy trained from early life to its special avocation—is, though it boasts of an appearance of science, quite inconsistent with the true principles of the art of business. . . . One of the most sure principles is that success depends on a due mixture of special and non-special minds—of minds which attend to the means, and of minds which attend to the end.

Bagehot believed that a civil service of the kind Mill desired would very soon arrogate to itself the commonsense business decisions which in *The English Constitution* are reserved to the inexpert minister in his department, and to the secret informal meetings of the Cabinet.

He did not deny that Napoleon in France and Frederick the Great in Germany had created far more efficient public administration than anything we knew in Britain. Indeed, he was prepared to admit that any dictatorial or revolutionary régime "is likely, whatever be its other defects, to have a far better and abler administration than any other Government. . . . The dictator dare not appoint a bad Minister if he would . . . that he will know how to mix fresh minds and used minds better; that he is under a stronger motive to combine them well." But he concludes very firmly "that the revolutionary selection of rulers obtains administrative efficiency at a price altogether transcending its value."

Cabinet government of this type could only function so long as state activity and the public services remained on a very small scale. Even so, as Bagehot frankly admitted, the price the business community paid for freedom from bureaucratic tyranny was the fantastic degree of incompetence revealed in the Crimean War. After 1868 both the powers of the state and the efficiency of the civil service increased very rapidly; and if Cabinet government of the classical type lasted far longer into this century than the parliamentary system to which it was linked, the reason is to be found in the readiness of the business community to tolerate, at least in peace-time, a high degree of incompetence in the highest places.

The first major change in the system was the ending of Cabinet informality by the creation of a secretariat to keep the minutes and circulate papers. This took place in World War I when Lloyd George was leading a small War Cabinet, in which all important decisions were centralised. But old-fashioned Cabinet government was re-established in the 1920s in a form not very different from that described in *The English Constitution*. In describing the Labour Government of 1929, where he had his first experience as a Cabinet minister, Lord Morrison makes it clear that normally decisions were still taken collectively by the full Cabinet. He also suggests—probably rightly—that this was one cause at least of the Labour Government's failure to cope with the economic crisis.

Already, in fact, by 1931 Cabinet Government in Bagehot's sense of the word had become an anachronism. It finally disappeared under the Churchill war régime. Once Sir Winston had accepted the leadership of the Conservative Party, his ascendancy became unchallengeable. As party leader, he controlled the Conservative machine inside and outside Parliament, and could therefore dictate his terms, not merely to the House of Commons but to the Labour members of his Cabinet. As Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, he was the apex of a pyramid of power, exerting a personal control over the whole of the war effort through a vastly expanded Cabinet secretariat, and a network of Cabinet committees under the chairmanship of ministers who had become his agents. Over wide fields of policy and administration Cabinet Government lapsed altogether, and the informal discussions of policy which are its lifeblood now took place exclusively between the Premier and his entourage.

When Mr. Clement Attlee took over in 1945, he was determined that there should be no "return to normalcy" as there was in 1918. Under his Premiership, a well-organised system of centralised decision-taking replaced the rather haphazard personal autocracy of Sir Winston. Despite his mild appearance, however, Mr. Attlee had no intention of becoming the chairman of a large traditional Cabinet. The war-time centralisation of power in the person of the Premier was in no way reduced by Mr. Attlee; and under him the enlarged Cabinet secretariat and the elaborate system of Cabinet committees were maintained and reorganised for peace-time purposes. In this way, the point of decision, which in the 1930s still rested inside the Cabinet, was now permanently transferred either downwards to these powerful Cabinet committees, or upwards to the Prime Minister himself.

The same forces which produced these changes in the structure and functions of the Cabinet were simultaneously responsible for an equally important but far less noticeable revolution in Whitehall. Since 1919 the civil service

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has been subjected to a double process of expansion and centralisation, which has transformed it from a collection of self-recruiting and autonomous departments into an ever more homogeneous bureaucracy controlled by a closely knit central directorate with its centre in the Treasury.

Until the end of World War I, the civil service had remained decentralised. Young men who joined a department expected to stay there. Moreover, because each department recruited its own staff under a Permanent Under-Secretary responsible to and appointed by the Departmental Minister, there was no difficulty in adding to the non-specialist civil servants recruited by the normal examination experts, technicians, and other specialists from outside.

All this was changed as the result of a decision promulgated by Lloyd George on September 4th, 1919.[3] Apparently the wartime Premier was persuaded by the then Secretary of the Treasury, Warren Fisher, that the only way of making available the best talents of all departments for post-war reconstruction was to unify the service and recognise the Secretary of the Treasury as its Head. This ruling was followed by a further regulation laying down that the consent of the Premier (which in practice meant the head of the civil service) would be required in all departments to the appointment of the permanent heads and their deputies.

As a result of these two regulations, it has by now become the exception rather than the rule for the head of a department to be a man with life-long service within it. A circulation of élites from Ministry to Ministry has replaced vertical promotion to the top of a single Ministry. Instead of a cluster of departments, each with its own traditions, characteristics, and standards of recruitment, there has emerged a new horizontal stratification, with the heads forming a single, like-minded group of superbureaucrats, each confident that he can take charge at a few weeks' notice of a Ministry of which he has had no previous experience. One inevitable by-product of this process has been the tendency to give technicians and experts a lower status, and to resent any attempt by a minister to introduce "outsiders" even into his private office. The system is more democratic if by democracy we mean the possibility of rising from the humblest clerical work to a Permanent Under-Secretaryship. But the price to be paid for this democracy is the surrender of leadership in Whitehall to "the Treasury mind," and an ever increasing uniformity of outlook and resistance to outside influences and new ideas.

Unification and centralisation have had two important political effects. Firstly they have made it even more difficult for departmental ministers to get their way against their senior officials, or where necessary to dismiss them. In our new kind of civil service, the minister must normally be content with the role of public relations officer to his department, unless the Premier has appointed him with the express purpose of carrying out reforms. Secondly, the centralisation of authority, both for appointments and for policy decisions, under a single head of the civil service (quite recently the task has been given to a committee of three) responsible to Downing Street, has brought with it an immense accretion of power to the Prime Minister. He is now the apex not only of the party but also of the administrative machine. As such, he has made himself master first of Parliament and now of the Cabinet too.

Prime-Ministerial Government

THUS THE POST-WAR epoch has seen the transformation of Cabinet Government into Prime Ministerial Government. Under this system the "hyphen which joins, the buckle which fastens, the legislative part of the state to the executive part" becomes one single man. Even in Bagehot's time it was probably a misnomer to describe the Premier as chairman, and *primus inter pares*. His right to select his own Cabinet and dismiss them at will; his power to decide the Cabinet's agenda and announce the decisions reached without taking a vote; his control, through the Chief Whip, over patronage had already before 1867 given him near-Presidential powers. Since then his powers have been steadily increased, first by the centralisation of the party machine under his personal rule, and secondly by the growth of a centralised state, so vast that it could no longer be managed by a Cabinet behaving like the board of directors of an old-fashioned company. Under Prime Ministerial government, secondary decisions are normally taken either by the department concerned or in Cabinet committee, and the Cabinet becomes the place where busy executives seek formal sanction for their actions from colleagues too busy—even if they do disagree—to do more than protest. Each of these executives, moreover, owes his allegiance not to the Cabinet collectively but to the Prime Minister who gave him his job, and who may well have dictated the policy he must adopt. In so far as ministers now feel themselves to be agents of the Premier, the British Cabinet has now come to resemble the American Cabinet.

[3] On this topic I have closely followed *"The Apotheosis of the Dilettante,"* a remarkable essay contributed by Dr. Thomas Balogh to *The Establishment* (1959).

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As Lord Home recently reminded us in the *Observer*:

> Every Cabinet Minister is in a sense the Prime Minister's agent—his assistant. There's no question about that. It is the Prime Minister's Cabinet, and he is the one person who is directly responsible to the Queen for what the Cabinet does.
>
> If the Cabinet discusses anything it is the Prime Minister who decides what the collective view of the Cabinet is. A Minister's job is to save the Prime Minister all the work he can. But no Minister could make a really important move without consulting the Prime Minister, and if the Prime Minister wanted to take a certain step the Cabinet Minister concerned would either have to agree, argue it out in Cabinet, or resign.

BUT THERE IS ONE important difference. The old doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility is scrupulously maintained and enforced, even though many of the decisions for which members must assume responsibility have been taken above their heads and without their knowledge. And this collective responsibility now extends downwards from the Cabinet through the ministers outside the Cabinet, to the parliamentary under-secretaries and even to the private parliamentary secretaries. Under this doctrine to-day, about a third of the Government's parliamentary strength is automatically required not merely to accept but actively to support policy decisions which, if they are of great importance, will nearly always have been taken by one man after consultation with a handful of advisers he has picked for the occasion. In Bagehot's day, collective Cabinet responsibility meant the responsibility of a group of equal colleagues for decisions taken collectively, after full, free, and secret discussion in which all could participate. It now means collective obedience by the whole administration, from the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor downwards, to the will of the man at the apex of power. This situation has been aptly summarised as follows:

> While British Government in the latter half of the 19th century can be described simply as Cabinet Government, such a description would be misleading to-day. Now the country is governed by the Prime Minister who leads, co-ordinates, and maintains a series of ministers, all of whom are advised and backed by the civil service. Some decisions are taken by the Premier alone, some in consultation between him and the senior ministers, while others are left to heads of departments, the Cabinet, Cabinet committees, or the permanent officials. Of these bodies the Cabinet holds the central position because although it does not often initiate policy, or govern in that sense, most decisions pass through it or are reported to it, and Cabinet ministers can complain that they have not been informed or consulted. The precise amount of power held by each agency, and the use made of the Cabinet depends on the ideas of the Premier, and the personnel and situation with which he has to deal.[4]

With the coming of Prime Ministerial government, the Cabinet, in obedience to the law that Bagehot discovered, now joins the other dignified elements in the Constitution. Of course, like the Monarchy, the House of Lords, and the Commons, it retains very real reserve powers which can on occasion be suddenly and dramatically used for good or for ill. A Prime Minister, for instance, can be unseated by his colleagues; and it is this fact with which the constitutional purists seek to justify the distinction they still make between Presidential and Prime Ministerial government. A President, we are told, cannot be removed before the end of his term of office; a Prime Minister can be.

The distinction is valid, provided we observe that a British party leader exerts such power and patronage within the machine that he can never be removed in real life by public, constitutional procedure. The method employed must always be that of undercover intrigue and sudden, unpredicted *coup d'état*. The intra-party struggle for power that is fought in the secret committees, and in the lobbies, may suddenly flare up round the Cabinet table. But if it does, the proceedings there will only be a ritual, and the real fight will have finished before they begin.

THE DECLINE OF THE CABINET has been concealed from the public eye even more successfully than its rise to power in Bagehot's era. Here was a secret of our modern English Constitution which no one directly concerned with government—whether minister, shadow minister, or civil servant—was anxious to reveal. Yet, despite the thick protective covering of prerogative and constitutional convention under which our government is still conducted, there must come occasions on which the drapery is whisked aside, and the reality of power revealed.

One such occasion was when Sir Winston, shortly after he took office in 1951, announced that the first British A-bomb had been successfully tested. The Premier was careful to pay his tribute to his predecessor, for making the initial decision and sanctioning the huge expenditures that had never been revealed to Parliament. Very soon it was common knowledge that this

[4] See *The British Cabinet*, by John P. Mackintosh (1962). Mr. Mackintosh was asked to produce a third revised edition of Berredale Keith's *British Cabinet System*. After some months' work he found the book so out-of-date that it could no longer, after adequate revision, be attributed to Keith. Hence this new book, in which the first attempt is made by a trained political scientist to record the changes in Cabinet structure made by the war.

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decision had been taken by Mr. Attlee without any prior discussion in the Cabinet, and that he had never revealed it to any but a handful of trusted friends.

Another occasion which showed the new role of the Cabinet under Prime Ministerial government was the Suez crisis. Anthony Eden (Lord Avon) took the decisions and prepared the plans for the Anglo-French attack on Port Said without Cabinet consultation, and with the assistance of only a handful of his permanent advisers. After the secret was revealed, he was able until he fell ill to enforce collective responsibility on Cabinet colleagues, who were only informed of his policy when it was already doomed to failure. He has been blamed for the policy; but no one has suggested that he acted unconstitutionally. Here then it was demonstrated that a British Premier is now entitled on really momentous decisions to act first, and then to face his Cabinet with the choice between collective obedience or the political wilderness.

IT HAS OFTEN been observed that when they were plunged into total war in 1940 the British people readily put their democratic Constitution into cold storage, and fought under a system of centralised autocracy. The Nazi totalitarian state was defeated because we were ready to accept a more far-reaching voluntary system. What is not so often noticed is the extent to which the institutions and the behaviour of voluntary totalitarianism have been retained since 1945. The development of Prime Ministerial government in Whitehall and Westminster has been accompanied outside by the growth of oligopoly in finance and industry, and by a startling concentration of power in newspapers, television, and most recently in publishing, which has enabled a handful of business men and executives to manage the new media of mass communications.

In a period of affluence, this rapid concentration of power occurs almost unnoticed by an indifferent electorate, which behaves with that deference Bagehot claimed to be the essential precondition of political stability in a free society. And from these two facts—the passivity of the people below and the concentration above of irresponsible power without democratic control—the conclusion is sometimes drawn that "democracy is unworkable," and that the modern, highly developed industrial state must be managed on authoritarian lines. The pessimists may be right. But a post-war decade is too short a period from which to draw firm conclusions. In theory—but also in practice—the British people retains the power not merely to choose between two Prime Ministers, and two parties, but to throw off its deferential attitude and re-shape the political system, making the parties instruments of popular control, and even insisting that the House of Commons should once again claim its ancient right to provide the popular check on the executive. It is my hope and my belief that this will happen. Already there are signs of popular protest against the growing ineffectiveness of Parliament and the oligarchic tendencies inherent in our modern two-party machine politics. Perhaps the secret of Prime Ministerial government discussed in these pages will be as rapidly overtaken by events as Bagehot's *English Constitution* was when it appeared in 1867.

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An Anthology

New Voices in Russian Writing

Introduction by PATRICIA BLAKE

Et l'art réunit...
là où la tyrannie sépare.
ALBERT CAMUS

"PASTERNAK was my only master," said a young Russian poet, Andrei Voznesensky, when I met him in Moscow last August. In 1954, when Voznesensky was twenty-one, he received a letter from Pasternak praising his first poems and inviting him to come and see him.

"From that time on I never left his side," Voznesensky said. "I moved out to Peredelkino and stayed near him until his death. When he died I felt that someone had come out of myself —out of my being. I felt utterly alone. I wanted to die. Then, I thought, someone must continue Pasternak's work. And now I'm no longer alone...."

It is true that Voznesensky is no longer alone. The most important change that has taken place on the Russian literary scene since Stalin is that the poets, the prose writers, and the playwrights —together with their public—have gradually ceased to suffer from the old, fearful sense of isolation. This development, in one decade, seems very nearly miraculous when one considers how effectively Stalin's attempt to atomise Soviet society interrupted intellectual and human discourse. The reflex of distrust, the habit of hypocrisy among individuals were merely symptoms of a sickness hitherto considered fatal: man's alienation from his own truth. So pervasive and so damaging was the 30-year terror that only heroes, lunatics, and possibly poets like Pasternak might impose either reason or imagination on the reality of the human condition under Stalin.

Yet to-day a genuine literary intelligentsia has come into being, composed not only of young writers whose experience with Stalinism has been slight, but also of older authors, like Konstantin Paustovsky and Nikolai Aseev, who have endured the entire Stalin era. The spirit of mutual trust, encouragement, and common cause which prevails among them is astonishing to any foreign visitor who has lately experienced the ferocious climate of literary life in, say, New York, Paris or London. These writers spend a good part of their time promoting their colleagues, battling for the publication of each other's work, manoeuvring to get their protégés into the Writers' Union, defending one another in the press against the conservative critics, and making arrangements to bring promising young people from the provinces to Moscow where they can develop in a more congenial atmosphere. Conversation with these writers is quite unlike the ceremonious evasions and circumlocutions one had become accustomed to among Soviet intellectuals in the recent past. Their questions and answers are candid; their manner is dignified, assured. Clearly this new intelligentsia has recovered that internal integrity

THIS *little anthology of new Russian poems and stories was collected by Patricia Blake and Max Hayward.*

Miss Blake has recently returned from a visit to the U.S.S.R. She is the editor of an edition of Mayakovsky's plays and poetry (see her essay in ENCOUNTER, *August 1960), and co-editor with Max Hayward of "Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature" (New York, 1962). She was formerly a Moscow correspondent for Life Magazine, and is now at work on a biography of Isaac Babel.*

Mr. Hayward is a fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford, and is co-translator of Boris Pasternak's "Dr. Zhivago" and Solzhenitsyn's recently published "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" (New York, 1963).

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which seemed shattered under Stalin and which is, of course, the precondition of literature.

Indeed, it now appears that after three decades of near-barrenness, Russia is again producing literature—burgeonings perhaps, by her nineteenth-century standards, but nonetheless splendidly promising. This development began during "the thaw" in 1956 among the writers clustered around the ill-fated almanac *Literary Moscow*, but was harshly arrested after the Hungarian Revolution by Khrushchev ("our hand will not tremble..." he threatened the writers) who was in no mood for anything remotely resembling a Petoefi Circle at home. There followed a period of brave failures and, evidently, literature "for the desk-drawer." During roughly the last three years, however, scarcely a month has passed when a young writer or poet has not published a work of the imagination, each bolder in form and substance than the last. The purpose of this collection is to introduce some of this new writing to Western readers, who understandably, have become accustomed to regarding contemporary Russian literature in terms of the cant, the dreary didacticism, and the onward-and-upward themes of "socialist realism." The editors submit that the poems and stories in this number, each in its own way, have served to restore Russian literature to the modern conscience.

IN A NATION where there exists no other forum for comparatively free expression than literature, these works have a resonance which is inconceivable in the West. "Every wall has a door," said my neighbour at a Moscow poetry reading, "and these young people have found it." What has happened is that the verse of such poets as Evtushenko, Voznesensky, Akhmadulina, and Vinokurov, the stories of Kazakov, Aksyonov, and Nagibin, the plays of Volodin and Rozov, have found an echo among a vast number of people who have at last discovered that they too are not alone—that there exist others who can both articulate and share their yearnings, their preoccupations, their tastes. These people are by no means all students. Voznesensky recently told a *Times* correspondent that his readers are mainly members of the "technological intelligentsia": "There are millions of them in Russia now. Many of them work on sputniks and other enormously complicated machines and they want poetry to be complicated too. They have no use for rhymed editorials...."

At present it is the poets who communicate most directly to Soviet readers, possibly because of the traditional response to poetry in Russia, but more likely because the immediacy of the form meets the urgency of the need. "Poetry," wrote Mallarmé, "is the language of a state of crisis." Editions of 100,000 copies of Evtushenko's books sell out within the first 48 hours of publication. Advance orders alone for Voznesensky's new book of verse, *The Triangular Pear*, reached 100,000 two months before its publication. The poetry sections of Soviet bookshops are fully stocked, however, with works by the old-guard poets which remain unsold from year to year. The inadequate size of printings of books by the new poets (a subject of bitter dispute within the Writers' Union) may have contributed to the rage for public readings which has recently seized Russia. The most spectacular of these took place last November in Moscow's Luzhniki Sports Stadium where 14,000 people gathered to hear Voznesensky, Akhmadulina, and Boris Slutsky; since then several other such readings have taken place, with some 10,000 in attendance, despite the recent anti-modernist offensive. Poetry readings on a more modest scale have become the principal entertainment of intellectuals in Moscow, and in provincial towns as well, where poets go by the truckload. Even Mayakovsky, who spent his lifetime travelling across Russia declaiming his verse, never commanded anything like the following of these young people.

Unfortunately, modern music and painting have proved less accessible (in every sense) to the general public. As these new works are very rarely performed or exhibited, public taste has not developed much beyond Rimsky-Korsakov and Repin. Impressionism is still considered, by both the authorities and the public, as the utmost limit of "modernism." Moreover, because the Party has been least permissive in its interpretation of socialist realism in these arts, music and painting are recovering far more slowly from the dreary academicism imposed on them for so many years. The plight of the modern painter is particularly acute; always the chief butt of the philistines, he is their captive in the Soviet Union. As Yuri Kazakov's story in this number suggests, the painter is often a desolate figure; frustrated and demoralised, he feels remote from the more fortunate literary intelligentsia.

THE RECENT CRACKDOWN, however, has served to unite artists in every field in a common front against the philistines. For since December 1, when Khrushchev visited the exhibition of non-representational painting at Moscow's Manège Hall, a rallying cry of the philistines has been heard across the land: "Such pictures were not painted by the hand of man but by the tail of a donkey!" It was clear at once that the

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offensive would not stop at painting but would extend, as indeed it has, to music and literature. At the first of the Central Committee meetings held in camera last December with 400 artists, composers and writers, Evtushenko protested against the charge that Russia's foremost sculptor, Ernst Neizvestny, is guilty of producing unpatriotic formalist art. According to Edmund Stevens of *Time*, Evtushenko said: "Neizvestny came back from the war with 14 bullets in his body and I hope he will live many more years and produce many more fine works of art."

"As people say," Khrushchev retorted, "only the grave corrects a hunchback."

Evtushenko's answer: "I hope we have outlived the time when the grave is used as a means of correction."

At the same meeting, Leonid Ilichev, the head of the "ideological commission" of the Central Committee, read (for purposes of refutation) a letter of protest addressed to Khrushchev and signed by prominent figures in the arts:

> Unless a variety of artistic trends can exist, art is doomed. . . . We now see how artists who have followed a single trend—the only trend which flourished under Stalin and which did not permit others to work or even to live—are beginning to interpret what you said at the exhibition. . . . We ask you to stop this return to past methods which are contrary to the whole spirit of our times.

Among the signers were the writers Simonov and Ehrenburg, the artists Konenkov and Favorski, the composer Shostakovich and the film director Romm. The meeting even succeeded in bringing together two famous enemies, Sholokhov and Ehrenburg. Sholokhov ostentatiously shook Ehrenburg's hand in a gesture of support when he was denounced by Galina Serebryakova (the widow of the Old Bolshevik).[1]

The invective heaped on the liberal intelligentsia at the Central Committee meetings and in the press during the past months is, of course, dreadfully familiar—a reminder, if one is needed, that the apparatus of repression remains intact and can be turned on full force at any moment. For the time being, however, the Party is apparently trying to define the limits of "de-Stalinisation" which, since 1956, has raised expectations and questions which cannot be met or answered by the present leadership. The situation is evidently thought to be "out of hand." Ilichev, in his major speeches of December 17 and 26, said:

> In certain discussions among intellectuals it is now considered indecent and old-fashioned to defend the correct Party positions; to do so is to appear to be a reactionary, a conservative, to lay oneself open to the accusation of dogmatism, sectarianism, narrow-mindedness, backwardness, Stalinism, etc. . . . It is one thing to combat the consequences of the cult of personality in order to assert the Leninist standards of life . . . and another to deal blows, under the guise of the struggle against these consequences, to our ideology, our life—in a word—to socialism and communism. . . .
>
> The question of creative freedom must be fully clarified. . . . We have full freedom to fight for communism. We have not and cannot have freedom to fight against communism.

However ominous Ilichev's declarations may sound, they point to a certain confusion within the Central Committee which was certainly not present when Zhdanov bore down upon the arts in 1946. To-day the artists, composers, and writers who are being singled out as the authors of "formalist monstrosities" are praised in the same breath for their "talent and sincerity." They are being given "warning" but

[1] This denunciation is perhaps the most ominous aspect of the current crackdown. According to Michel Tatu of *Le Monde*, Serebryakova accused the 72-year-old Ehrenburg not only of political crimes, but of felonies "so grave and so incredible that it would be unseemly to report them here." Incredible, too, is the witness she invoked against Ehrenburg: Alexander Poskrebyshev, Stalin's personal secretary—who was long thought to be dead, but who is in fact living in Moscow and writing his memoirs!

At the same meeting, Nikolai Gribachev, a candidate member of the Central Committee, did not hesitate to use the word "cosmopolitanism" in connection with Ehrenburg's patronage of modern art. The old-guard painters and writers at once seized the opportunity thus offered them to open fire on a man who, whatever the degree of his compromise with Stalinism in the past, has been one of the most eloquent and effective opponents of the survivals of Stalinism.

A series of articles appeared in the press abusing Ehrenburg in highly chauvinistic terms for having "betrayed" the great traditions of Russian realism. The author of the most scurrilous of these is the critic Vladimir Ermilov who has been expert at denunciations since 1930 when he accused Mayakovsky of being a tool of the Trotskyite opposition. In *Izvestiya*, Jan. 30, Ermilov attacked Ehrenburg for "unethical" behaviour during Stalin's purges; since Ehrenburg knew the facts, unlike "ordinary Soviet citizens" such as Ermilov, he should have spoken out against them. When Ehrenburg protested in a letter to *Izvestiya* that Ermilov had insulted him "as a man and as a Soviet citizen," the paper editorialised that Ermilov had a perfect right to criticise Ehrenburg's "wrong tendencies and positions." The accusations of Serebryakova and Ermilov are evidently to the liking of the authorities who, in their zeal to extricate themselves from their own complicity with Stalinism, are not averse to seeing Ehrenburg used as a scapegoat.

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are told there will be no more witch hunts. In fact the writers are being invited to join the Party in rooting out the "aftermath of the cult of personality in all spheres of life." Unfortunately, the aftermath of Ilichev's speeches has thus far been to restore some of the most notorious among the Stalinist diehards to positions of influence in the arts. Chakovsky has been named editor of the once liberal *Literary Gazette*, Serov, director of the Academy of Arts, and Laktyonov, head of the largest art school in the country (the Surikov Institute). Even 82-year-old Alexander Gerasimov, Stalin's court painter for twenty years, has reappeared on the scene. Gerasimov, whose portraits of Stalin in every conceivable pose vanished some time ago from the nation's museums, has at last found the appropriate time and place (*Trud*, January 9) to avenge himself on a whole series of persons and publications which he claims have promoted "formalist art"—including the journal *Ogonyok*, edited by the arch-conservative Sofronov, and *Nedelya*, edited by Khrushchev's son-in-law, Adzhubei. Gerasimov remarks, "One must call things by their name, cite names and facts," thereby demonstrating to every honest man in Russia the hopelessness of doing just that.

THE PROBLEM IS, of course, that "Stalinism" has become a highly elastic and convenient term of abuse, impossible to define or, indeed, distinguish from any number of enduring features of Soviet society. In fact, the accusation of "Stalinism" is a weapon whose effect depends on, in Lenin's words, "who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed." In the hands of Khrushchev and his colleagues it has served to dispose of their competitors for power, at the same time advancing a case for the legitimacy of a régime which has "unmasked the crimes of Stalin and restored Leninist principles." In the name of de-Stalinisation the present leadership has also attempted to rid the nation of certain institutions and persons that prevent Russia from truly competing with the modern world, *e.g.* the unproductive slave labour system, and the army of incompetent bureaucrats who stand in the way of technological progress. For the liberal intelligentsia, "Stalinism" is aimed principally at the enemies of the intellect: the dogmatist and the didact, the Pharisee and the Philistine whose philosophy is still nicely summed up by the official in Saltykov-Shchedrin's 19th century satire: "What I do not understand is dangerous for the state." Moreover, "Stalinism" is for them not merely a practical but a moral issue. Konstantin Paustovsky undoubtedly spoke for the whole of the new intelligentsia when at a closed meeting of the Moscow Writers' Union in 1956 he accused the surviving Stalinist bureaucrats of "betrayal, calumny, moral assassination and just plain assassination." But no matter how the word is interpreted, the spirit of Stalinism —pervasive, tangible, suffocating—remains the central problem of the nation.

I REMEMBER with particular vividness the scene I witnessed last summer at the entrance of an auditorium where several hundred students were clamouring to be admitted to a poetry reading. Seats were evidently still available—a number of official-looking men had just been let in without question. Among the young people in the crowd was a 19-year-old American student of Russian from the University of Indiana. Surely this very pretty and engaging girl could have charmed her way through police lines anywhere in the world, possibly even in Tirana or Peking; here, she was faced by a barricade of boys in their 20s, the *druzhiniki* (voluntary police) with red arm-bands and stony faces. The Russian students had taken up her cause and lifted her over the heads of the crowd. She cajoled the *druzhiniki*, she twiddled their Komsomol badges, then, having failed, burst into tears, crying, "But I've come all the way from Bloomington to hear Evtushenko!..."

Such people are everywhere in the Soviet Union: the *druzhiniki*, the vigilantes, the dreary people who are forever denouncing their colleagues for "adultery" or "foul language." They can be spotted through the entire chain of authority from the poisonous little prig in the Young Pioneer cell, through the *Obkom* Secretary *à la* Kochetov, all the way to the Kremlin. What characterises them is the way they hold on for dear life to every ounce or *pood* of power they possess, the cant they substitute for ordinary human discourse, and their utter disregard for other people. Indeed, of all the well-known contradictions of Soviet society none has impressed me more than the contrast between the *druzhiniki* outside the auditorium and the people at the poetry reading inside.

THIS POETRY READING was one of a series of six I attended in the public auditorium of Moscow's Polytechnic Museum. These began at 5 p.m. and, with only brief intermissions, lasted until midnight. The auditorium was filled to capacity —about 700 people, largely students from the university and from various institutes where tickets had been distributed. A majority had brought books of poetry which they followed, like music scores, during the performance. On stage, before a blue velvet backdrop on which was lettered "COMMUNISM IS THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD, THEREFORE YOUTH MUST CONSTRUCT IT", sat four poets, Evtushenko, Voznesensky, Bulat

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Okudzhava (the immensely popular half-Georgian, half-Armenian who accompanies his poems on the guitar), and a lesser-known poet, Sergei Polikarpov.

The first to read was the 29-year-old Voznesensky. An awkward figure, slight and singularly vulnerable, he stood before the microphone with his legs stiffly apart, his Adam's apple bobbing, bearing the applause and the shouts of acclaim from the audience as if they were blows. He announced the title of his poem *Fire in the Architectural Institute.* "Fire! Fire!" he called out, "Oi! We're on fire!" This poem (which is published on page 54) is, of course, a joke on the Academy: *"all those cowsheds decorated with cupids and those post-offices in rococo."* It is also, I was told, a private joke shared by the audience (the Moscow Architectural Institute burned down when Voznesensky was a student there, consuming his designs together with his career as an architect).

He read poem after poem for perhaps an hour in a powerful, cultivated voice. His awkwardness had gone; now it was his listeners who appeared tense, straining forward to capture the flow of a language unheard-of in Russia in their lifetime. Here, clearly, was Russia's first modern poet. A prodigious technician, Voznesensky constructs his verse of assonances, rhymes, and puns which serve his intention rather as a brilliant orchestration serves a central musical idea. ("Form isn't what counts," he says. "Form must be clear, unfathomable, disquieting, like the sky in which only radar can sense the presence of a plane.") "I am Goya," begins one of his most extraordinary poems whose essential quality is not renderable in English. *"I am Goya/eye sockets of shell craters have been picked out by an enemy/flying over a bare field/I am sorrow/I am the voice/of war/ the embers of cities on the snows of the year '41/I am hunger/I am the throat of a woman whose body like a bell/hangs over a naked square...."* In Russian the assonances are devastating: *"Ya Góya ... nagóye ... ya górye ... ya gólos ... góda ... ya gólod ... ya górlo ... góloi...."*

Most characteristic of Voznesensky's idiom are the abrupt shifts of tone and intention within the same poem, or even the same line; he is tender, jocular, mocking, and finally and most compellingly, ironic. He is a master of irony and to this end employs not only his technical resources (for example, juxtaposing, punning, or rhyming internally a pompous word with far-out slang) but also his alarming associations, fantasies and images, as in *The Skull Ballad* (see page 56) where the decapitated head of Anna Mons, the mistress of Peter the Great, speaks to the Czar in these terms: *"Love is so small who cares for love/in times like these men build/and set a world on fire—you kiss/me State in blood in blood."*[2]

Voznesensky's critics persist in accusing him of "formalism" and ambiguity. To the first charge he answers, in *Evening on the Building Site* (see page 58), *"They nag me about 'formalism'/Experts, what a distance/you are from life! Formalin:/You stink of it, and incense."* And again in *Anti-Worlds* (see page 46), which is a play on the concept of anti-matter, he writes: *"Ah, my critics; how I love them./Upon the neck of the keenest of them,/ Fragrant and bald as fresh-baked bread,/there shines a perfect anti-head...."* To the charge of ambiguity, he replies, in *Who are You?: "I am among avalanches/like the abominable snowman/absolutely elusive."*

To his enemies Voznesensky is indeed elusive, but to his tremendous following he speaks more clearly than any writer in Russia. ("Here is a *real* poet," Evtushenko said to me when he in-

[2] The critic, V. Nazarenko, writing in *Zvezda* last July, has made an invidious attempt to "decipher" this poem, and others which are part of the cycle *The Triangular Pear.* He suggests that Voznesensky deliberately invented the beheading of Anna Mons (she actually died a natural death) at the so-called "Place of Skulls" on Red Square, inserted such anachronisms as a motor-bike, and the Czar's moustache, and used Soviet terminology such as *stroitelstvo* (meaning construction, as in "Socialist construction," in the lines quoted above which read literally "... who cares for love/in a time of construction and conflagration...") in order to "express certain reflections of universal application." Nazarenko goes on to insinuate that Voznesensky is protesting against fundamental Marxist notions:

> "We have here, in allegorical form, gloomy reflections on the supposedly tragic fate of the individual supposedly crushed by social laws... on an eternal and universal scale. The message of *The Triangular Pear* is that the world is immutable and that everything will remain as it always was—that man is eternal and the tragedy of the individual is eternal."

In connection with a cycle of poems about America, Nazarenko also insinuates that when Voznesensky writes about oppressed Negroes in America, he is actually speaking about the fate of poets in Russia. (Voznesensky's lines read: *"We are Negroes/we are poets.... When they trample us underfoot/they are kicking the stars/the whole universe howls under your jackboots!"*)

Voznesensky was promptly defended in *Literary Gazette* by the 74-year-old poet Nikolai Aseev who accuses Nazarenko of making "unseemly innuendoes" reminiscent of the Stalin era. "This critic should remember that poets think in images," he writes, "not for the sake of camouflage but because they are poets."

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troduced me to Voznesensky during an intermission. "He hasn't made his reputation through sensation—like some people one knows. . . .") Voznesensky often talks of his responsibility to the people who have given him their confidence: "When a man writes, he feels his prophetic mission in the world. The task of the Russian poet to-day is to look deep inside man. When I read my poetry to a great number of people, their emotional, almost sensual, expression of feeling seems to me to reveal the soul of man—now no longer hidden behind closed shutters, but wide open like a woman who has just been kissed." The response to Voznesensky that evening was like nothing I have ever observed in the West, either at the theatre or in a concert hall, let alone at poetry recitals. As Voznesensky (smiling now, sweat streaming down his face like tears) was called back again and again to the footlights, I saw young men and women all around me rise and (crying real tears) call out their thanks.

I FELT a little sorry for the poet to follow; it had to be an anti-climax. But no. Bulat Okudzhava, who appeared before the microphone cheerfully strumming a guitar, evidently inspires another sort of enthusiasm, and it broke the tension in the hall. A small dark man of thirty-seven with fuzzy, receding hair and a minute moustache, he is famous in Russia for his recordings of Odessa underworld songs (which circulate widely on tape), and for his own plaintively comic poems which he sings on public occasions in the manner of the French *chansonnier*. The audience seemed to know all his poems by heart and called for them by name: "Songs to Fools," "So Long, Kid," "Midnight Trolleybus." *"When I'm fed up/when despair comes over me/I jump into a blue trolleybus,"* he sings pleasantly but tunelessly, *"Midnight trolleybus! Speed along the streets/roll around the boulevards/pick up those shipwrecked in the night! . . ."* However slight in substance, Okudzhava's little poems have charm, humour, and poignancy—qualities which appear all too rarely in Soviet literature.[3]

[3] But not rarely enough for Ilichev. "The Soviet people love songs," he said in his speech of December 26, "but side by side with songs with a broad civic motif, songs which sing the spiritual beauty of the Soviet people and reveal the purity of their souls, there are also vulgar songs which are designed to appeal to low and cheap tastes. In particular, the verse and songs of the gifted poet B. Okudzhava are out of keeping with the entire structure of our life. Their whole intonation—everything about them—does not come from purity of soul but from a kind of hysteria. . . ."

Recently Okudzhava has begun to write fiction. His autobiographical novella, *Good Luck, Schoolboy!*, excerpts from which appear in this number, suggests that the strumming of the *chansonnier* conceals more serious intentions. For Okudzhava, who was wounded at the front, the war remains the most meaningful experience of his life. And like so many of his generation, he is obviously weary of the hortatory tone of the majority of Soviet novels, plays and films about what is invariably called "the heroic feat of the People in the Great Patriotic War"; these serve only to de-humanise and diminish the feat of people (with a small 'p'). Okudzhava's novella is one of the rare works of Soviet literature which deal sympathetically with the non-heroics of war, viz., such hitherto unheard-of sentiments as the fear, bewilderment, and bravado of a teenage boy making his way across a German minefield. Inevitably the old guard critics were outraged. "Vindication of the fear of death!" protested A. Metchenko in *Kommunist*. "Mawkish pacifism! Okudzhava is insulting the memory of those who died in order to save those who are living, including himself."

THE NEXT TO RECITE was Evtushenko. His appearance brought forth cries of "Hi, Zhenya!" and "Give us Babi Yar!" and a barrage of paper pellets on which his admirers had written requests for their favourite poems. It was clear at once that this young man's popularity is extra-literary; although Evtushenko is gifted as a poet, it is the occasional boldness of his subjects which has made his national and international reputation—especially his protest against anti-Semitism. "Zhenya is a Columbus," one of his enraptured admirers told me. "He charts courses no one would dare dream of, and then everyone follows in his wake." Moreover, he is marvellously handsome and engaging. Dressed in a wildly-patterned American sports-shirt under a grey silk suit, he brushed back his blond forelock and waved familiarly at the audience. "*Horosho*—all right, you'll have your *Babi Yar*."

But first he read a comic poem which he has not yet succeeded in getting published: "How a Scoundrel Takes a Steambath." This is about a detestable bureaucrat. When he goes to the public steambath he pretends to be a real friend of the people; he is always ready to scrub the back of his neighbour, and he wears a *banny list* (a leaf from the birch twigs used to beat oneself in steambaths, which sometimes gets imbedded in the skin like a burr) as an "order of democracy." But while lying in the hot water he sighs and pines for Stalin. And at night, before going to sleep he always treats himself to a chapter or two of Kochetov (the Stalinist

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novelist who is the arch enemy of the liberal writers). The next morning he resumes his villainy....

The audience roared with pleasure and then clamoured for *Babi Yar*. He reads it with unmistakable feeling, his arms open to the audience, his hands trembling a bit: *"To-day I am as old as the Jewish people/It seems to me now that I am a Jew...."* When he had finished, the crowd began pounding on the floor with their feet. "Again, at once!" He read it again, and later in the evening when the audience would not relent, read it once more. When this happened for the fourth time, Evtushenko shouted for silence and said, "Comrades, you and I have been in this hall for six hours and I have read that poem four times. I should think you would be as tired of hearing it as I am of reciting it." But again they pounded and once again he complied. It is a moving experience to hear this boy, so grave and so commanding, read *Babi Yar* to an audience of utterly mesmerised young Russians: *"Let the Internationale ring out/When the last anti-Semite on earth is buried./There is no Jewish blood in mine,/but I am hated by every anti-Semite as a Jew. And for this reason/I am a true Russian."*

He also recited that evening a cycle of poems glorifying Castro's Cuba. One of these, *Three Minutes of Truth*, seemed to suggest why popular enthusiasm for that revolution runs so high in Russia. The poem is about a *barbudo* who seizes a radio station during the Batista régime and, for three minutes, speaks "the truth" to the people; he is then captured and shot. It ends with an exhortation by the poet who calls upon the youth of the world to remember this Cuban hero when they hear a lie: run the risk, even if it is death, but tell the truth. Evtushenko's intention is certainly not equivocal, but the poem, like the Cuban revolution itself, can be interpreted in more than one way. Whatever the reality of Cuba (and who in Russia can know?), for some it stands for what is most decent and pure in the revolutionary impetus; for others it means, simply, liberation from tyranny.

I saw the exhibition of Cuban painting in Moscow—the first show entirely devoted to abstract paintings for some thirty-five years. The most interesting exhibit there was the Comment Book, where visitors are invited to note their reactions. Evtushenko, who had evidently attended the opening, had the first word: "The Cubans have shown our respected painters that revolution and abstract art are not incompatible." An outraged philistine wrote: "I don't understand the pictures and I'm proud of it!" Someone replied: "If you don't understand, go to a lunatic asylum and have your head examined!" The most touching comment: "It is good that Cuban artists have freedom, for freedom is the beginning of everything...."

DURING AN INTERMISSION, I joined Evtushenko and the other poets in a corner of the downstairs lobby. Youngsters were leaning over the whole length of the banister, obviously longing to approach their favourites for an autograph or a word of greeting. A boy of about sixteen broke away from the crowd and began walking round and round Evtushenko, frowning fiercely. Evtushenko called him over: "What's the matter?" The boy did not answer but thrust a little volume of Evtushenko's verse at its author who signed his name in an enormous scrawl. And still the boy circled round Evtushenko. "Come on, be happy!" said Evtushenko. The boy looked up at the poet, taller than he by a foot, and said, "That's not enough, to be happy." Then he added, "Zhenya, why do you use the word communism so much in your poetry? Don't you think we're tired of all those banal slogans?" Evtushenko patted the boy on the head and told him very gently, "Communism is my favourite word." As I went upstairs to my seat, the boy stopped me and said, "Zhenya is a great man—you were lucky to be able to talk with him."

Back on stage, Evtushenko read his now-famous *The Heirs of Stalin* which appeared in *Pravda* two months later. For a year, however, no editor dared touch it, and in fact Evtushenko had already yielded to censorship at the time of this reading. In an earlier version the poem begins at the moment of Stalin's death: his survivors, who only a minute before were prostrate before his bed, now dance around his body, cursing him. Suddenly Stalin opens one eye (the reference is to a similar legend about Ivan the Terrible) and they throw themselves on the floor again and beg his forgiveness. Even in its censored form, however, the poem has a compelling message: Stalin is only feigning death; his heirs publicly curse him, privately long for his return. *"Double and triple the guards beside his grave,"* the poet beseeches the authorities, *"lest Stalin rise again!"* Evtushenko's reading of *The Heirs of Stalin* created an extraordinary disturbance that evening. During the *disput* or public discussion that took place following the recitations, a young man came to the microphone and said in a quavering voice: "Now I like Zhenya's poetry very much. It is very deep, very thought-provoking. But that poem about Stalin—well—I know Stalin did some very bad things, but he also did some very good things...." A fearful deafening roar broke out in the hall. I thought the boy was about to be lynched. Somebody's protecting hands snatched him away.

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Some comic relief then presented itself on stage: a stocky, middle-aged man, absolutely bald, with an enormous black spade beard, and dressed in a black turtle-neck sweater and a black serge suit. Speaking with great effort and clutching the microphone, he introduced himself: "I am Engineer Dymshits." He began speaking in short breathless phrases which I couldn't quite catch, and I turned to my neighbour for clarification. "I don't get it either," he said. But soon the man was identified: this was the inevitable crank who turns up in various guises at public meetings all over the world. Engineer Dymshits works in a computer factory; he was taking the opportunity to tell the audience, in highly technical language, about the manufacture of adding machines.

Most of the other speakers praised the poets warmly, until a young Soviet army lieutenant, a good-looking blond boy in a splendidly tailored uniform, appeared. "I've been sitting here for hours listening to poetry, comrades, and I must say I haven't the faintest idea what it's all about." His complaint was good-humoured. The audience snickered, rather less good-humouredly. "All I know is that it's very gloomy, very depressing. Why don't you write about happy subjects—subjects that uplift?" He was interrupted by groans and cat-calls. "For instance," he persisted, "about the Soviet army." Now the audience was laughing. "Well, I'll tell you," he said amiably, "if you don't take my advice and write about the Soviet army, *we'll make you!*" As the lieutenant was booed off the stage, Okudzhava came to the microphone and quieted the crowd with these words: "Chekhov said that it is the wise man who wants to listen and the fool who wants to teach. . . ."

The last speaker, a teen-age boy, came on stage with a small bunch of red roses in his hands. He addressed Sergei Polikarpov, whose pleasant but rather undistinguished poem had barely been applauded. "No one has mentioned Polikarpov," he said, "and I feel very bad about it. It's not nice. Polikarpov is a good man. He is one of us. So I want to present him with these flowers and thank him on behalf of everybody in this hall." It was the sort of small and singularly characteristic incident which, perhaps more than anything else, can endear Russia to the stranger.

AFTER THE POETRY READING Evtushenko invited me to join him and some of his friends for supper. It was after midnight and every restaurant in Moscow had closed its doors, but Evtushenko persuaded the manager to let us in the back way of the restaurant of the Society of Actors. I had never seen anything like it in Moscow before. Pretty girls with beehive hairdos and green eyelids, wearing fuzzy Italian mohair sweaters over short pleated skirts, went from table to table, greeting friends. At one table, a group of young actors in over-tailored, over-tight suits were singing *Blue Suede Shoes* in something like English. It could have been a hip Greenwich Village night club (except for a few square details, like the pair of transparent plastic shoes I glimpsed on a girl, with a single red rose imprisoned in each heel).

Evtushenko ordered several bottles of sweet Caucasian champagne and some excellent Bulgarian wine for his guests, and, as the kitchen had closed, fruit and chocolate bars. We were seven: the host, Bulat Okudzhava, a beautiful Russian singer, two modest young girls from the Moscow Art Theatre school, and Evgeni Vinokurov whom Evtushenko had summoned to the restaurant by telephone. (The 37-year-old Vinokurov, who dislikes reading in public and does not participate in literary politics, is nonetheless very much a part of the circle of "young poets".) Exhilarated by the success of the reading, Evtushenko continually pressed wine on the company and fed us bits of chocolate from hand to mouth. The singer broke out in several splendid renditions of Ella Fitzgerald songs. We drank toasts to Evtushenko, to poetry, to love. It was a gay party—and memorable, for here began a series of incidents relating to Jews as electrifying as the demonstrations I had just witnessed for *Babi Yar*.

PRESENTLY a much older man, wrapped in a flowing cape, came and sat down at our table for a time. Evtushenko hugged him and kissed him repeatedly on both cheeks. He was a poet, I was told, with an obviously Jewish name, something like Isaac Solomonovich. Evtushenko and the man sat huddled together and exchanged endearments in the Russian style. Every now and then, Evtushenko would lean across the table to me and say, "What a wonderful man Isaac Solomonovich is—you can't imagine!" And I would say, "Yes, I can see that—wonderful!" After several such nonsensical exchanges, Evtushenko half-rose from his chair and seized my arm. "No!" he said, with a look of extraordinary exaltation, "you *can't* imagine what a wonderful man Isaac Solomonovich is," and added, in English now, "You can't imagine the wonderful quality of his Jewishness." I turned to Vinokurov who was sitting beside me, plump and composed as a Buddha. He nodded: *"Da, da, chudno! On evrei.* Yes, wonderful! He's a Jew."

When the restaurant closed at 2.30 a.m., Evtushenko announced that we would all drop in on a friend who would be pleased to play host to our party. We gathered up the fruit and

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what remained of the wine and ambled down several streets until we reached an old-fashioned apartment house. We climbed up five flights, laughing, singing, dropping apples on the stairs, and knocked on a door which was opened by a short, dark man in his shirt sleeves. He was surprised to see us, but greeted us warmly and took us into the kitchen. On the large round table lay an open book, and on the stove, a little brass kettle with some Turkish coffee. I glanced at the book and saw that it was printed in the old pre-revolutionary Russian orthography. I turned to the title page: it was "A History of the Jewish People", dated 1910.

We brought out the wine and fruit and continued with our party as gaily as before. After a time, I turned to the host and asked him quietly if he was Jewish. "No, no, of course not!" he replied emphatically, and introduced himself. The name, patronymic, and surname were all typically Russian. "Oh, well," I fumbled, "I thought... since you were reading that book...." "But I am passionately interested in this question," he said with increasing emphasis, "aren't *you*?" I looked up and saw that everyone at the table was watching me, hard. "Yes, I am," I answered, and added, "I am Jewish." At once the guests stood and raising their glasses honoured me, in Hebrew, with that most beautiful of toasts: *Lechaim!* To life!

LECHAIM! Such incidents are unlikely to occur anywhere in the world but in Soviet Russia where Hebrew is a forbidden language, where Yiddish culture, suppressed under Stalin, is still severely handicapped, and anti-Semitism (both official and popular) continues to flourish. Since 1956, when Paustovsky was the first to accuse the old guard *apparatchiki* of anti-Semitism,[4] the liberal intellectuals have manifested their concern for Jews both publicly and privately. The novelist Victor Nekrassov, for example, protested vehemently against plans to build a sports stadium on the site of the massacre of Babi Yar. Recently Shostakovich composed a 13th symphony whose fourth movement is a solo and choral recitation of Evtushenko's *Babi Yar*. As a result, Khrushchev is reported to have criticised both Shostakovich and Evtushenko for their "excessive interest" in the "non-existent" Jewish problem. Official displeasure with the 13th symphony was reflected publicly in an editorial on December 25th in *Soviet Culture*, the only journal to take note of its first performance:

> Under the cover of the struggle against the cult of personality, certain creative artists have been rummaging around in garbage cans in the backyards of our life, not wishing to see what is happening on the great boulevards of our progress.... If, for example, a composer creates a symphony based on themes that are sombre, sarcastic, mawkish, or pessimistic, then whether he means to or not, he has objectively contributed to blackening our life, and distorting and blurring our vision of it.

The intellectuals' concern for the Jews is no doubt seen as an aspect of "abstract humanism," (of which the intellectuals are frequently accused) as distinguished from "socialist humanism" which is, by definition, an all-embracing scheme of moral values. Increasingly the Party is reminding the people that it alone is the "standard-bearer" of all conceivable humanist ideals and the enemy of every injustice known to man. On one point, however, the Party has long been silent: anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Perhaps the crowds that clamour for *Babi Yar* at poetry readings have seized upon the issue less because of philo-Semitism than because it is the one moral issue that has not been co-opted by the Party. "Abstract humanists" may simply be persons who have become wary of any moralising ideology which serves as a mask for oppression.

THE SOVIET reading public is, of course, hardly confined to philo-Semites, anti-Stalinists, and devotees of poetry readings; there exist countless other citizens whose taste has not developed beyond the instructional rhymes and tracts which up until recently passed for literature. To-day the "scoundrels" of Evtushenko's poem, who "pine and sigh for Stalin," have their choice of abundant bedside reading—notably, the works of Vsevolod Kochetov whose novels continue to be printed in hundreds of thousands of copies. The nature of their appeal is obvious. Take Denisov, the hero of Kochetov's latest novel, *The Obkom Secretary*, who returns home after hearing Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes at the 20th Party Congress, and says to his wife:

> "Sonya, Sonya, all our life we spent with him, life was unthinkable without him. We thought: we will die but he will live on and on, because in him we loved Lenin. Do you remember how he taught us to love Lenin? Do you remember *Problems of Leninism*?"... Then they took out *Problems of Leninism* and re-read the inspired chapters on Vladimir Ilyich. "Sonya, Sonya," he said, "in him we loved the Party, our dear Party which brought us up, which taught us, which

[4] In a speech to the Moscow Writers' Union, Paustovsky (of mixed Cossack and Polish origin) described the Stalinist bureaucrats, who are, he said, "no fewer in number than they were," in these terms: "They are cynics, black obscurantists ... who quite openly carry on anti-Semitic talk of a kind worthy of pogrom-makers."

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armed us with an idea which made life three times more reasonable and contented. Sonya!"

Standing in front of Stalin's photograph he says:

"No, I cannot judge him. He can be judged by the Party, the people, history. But not by me, Vasili Denisov. Taken separately I am too small for this. Sonya, you understand me, don't you?" What could she reply—she cried together with him.[5]

Kochetov's novels contain the essence of Soviet philistinism. Here the enemy is nearly always the liberal intelligentsia—a band of revisionist rascals who are engaged in subverting the work of such good Communists as Denisov. It follows then that in real life Kochetov should be the leader of the ultra-orthodox faction in the Writers' Union, and the man most universally despised by the liberal writers and their public. Last April, in the heyday of the liberals' influence in literary politics, Kochetov was not even put up for election to the board of the Moscow branch of the Writers' Union. Yet even when the die-hards seemed to be in retreat, Kochetov managed to maintain considerable influence as the editor of the journal *Oktyabr*, and he was awarded the Order of Lenin in 1962 on his fiftieth birthday. To-day, Kochetov's intransigence seems to have paid off. In *Pravda* (January 1), he wrote:

There is a battle of worlds going on—a cruel, irreconcilable struggle between two ideologies. And now the Party has begun to notice that on certain sectors of the front, in our battle for the minds of people, something is not quite right. Certain realist artists, instead of taking the offensive, have been forced to go on the defensive, and instead it is the formalists and abstractionists who have gone over to the attack. The activity of these people is alien to socialist realism because it is the spawn of the capitalist world.

Few of the liberal writers have personal dealings with Kochetov. He remains utterly aloof, never appearing, I was told, at the restaurant of the Writers' Union or at any but the most official functions. Moscow journalists, Russian and foreign, have rarely encountered him. Therefore when I telephoned him for an interview I was surprised at the readiness with which he accepted. We met the following day in the boardroom of the *Oktyabr* offices. Here I had another surprise. In appearance, Kochetov is anything but the rough-and-ready proletarian his novels evoke. Except for his unpleasantly thin lips, he is a handsome man with fine features and a slim figure. He was impeccably dressed in a business-like dark suit, white shirt, and striped tie.

He greeted me most courteously, almost gratefully, it seemed. And indeed it soon became clear that Kochetov's isolation is not entirely self-imposed. During some ceremonious chit-chat early in the interview, I asked him how it happened that he was in town in August when so many Muscovites were on vacation. "Aha! So that's why you asked to see me!" he said. "You would never have come if other writers were in Moscow, would you?" Later, warming up a bit, he told me that journalists hardly ever visit him, "especially women like you.... All I see here are would-be contributors—housewives who stir *kasha* with one hand and write poetry with the other...."

KOCHETOV WAS EAGER to talk but evidently wished to say nothing. Never before had I met a man so composed in the face of disagreeable questions, and so adroit at parrying them. Only his long, beautiful fingers which drummed on the green felt-covered table between us conveyed any agitation. Even his one expression of anger sounded deliberate. "*Eto vranyo!* It's a lie!" he exclaimed, when I asked him to comment on the charge that he is "a reactionary, a Stalinist, and a baiter of intellectuals."

"Only *Literary Gazette* and *Novy Mir* read *The Obkom Secretary* that way. I can't imagine why. All the other critics and most of my readers understood that the novel is directed against Stalinism. I even got a letter from an American woman saying that I had helped her to understand the Soviet state better by following the principles of socialist realism." As for the charge that he is anti-intellectual, he said, "Now let us do some arithmetic. Take my novel *The Brothers Ershov*." He pulled out a pad of paper and made some calculations: "I will list the negative characters first. See, there are four: an inventor, a theatre director, etc.—all intellectuals. And here are the positive characters. Please note that there are five—all intellectuals. In other words the positive intellectuals outnumber the negative!"

I asked what he thought would happen to Soviet literature if writers were no longer ex-

[5] This passage provoked severe criticism in *Novy Mir* and *Literary Gazette*.

"Kochetov sinned greatly against the truth," wrote Evgeni Surkov (not to be confused with Alexei Surkov, the former secretary of the Writers' Union) in *Literary Gazette*, December 16, 1961, "when in portraying Denisov's sufferings, he did not credit him with a single thought or word about what shook all of us that moment: the enormity of the crimes which were revealed." Surkov was immediately rebuked in the journal *Soviet Russia* for using Stalinist methods of criticism against Kochetov. The Party tried to settle the argument by praising *The Obkom Secretary* in *Kommunist*, the organ of the Central Committee.

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pected to describe people in terms of positive and negative characters. What if socialist realism were to be abandoned and writers permitted to describe whatever reality they themselves perceive?

"It couldn't last," he answered. "As a matter of fact some of our writers are trying to do as you say, following the Western idea that life must be described as it is. But this is not art. It's the destruction of art. Art should certainly express truth, but only by certain means. The aim of Soviet art to-day must be to form the consciousness of the people while the material basis of communism is being established." Kochetov then launched into an interminable disquisition on the Party programme for the next twenty years. Finally, returning to literature, he said, "Only great art that educates and uplifts is genuinely loved by the great mass of people." I observed that in the West great art usually takes some time to be understood by the great mass of people, and that unfortunately most people seem to prefer what is most vulgar in our culture. "When you talk about vulgarity," he said, "I suppose you mean someone like me...."

Here, clearly, was a profoundly embittered man. When he spoke about his early life I began to sense the private passions engaged in his battle against the new intelligentsia. Kochetov is the youngest of eight children, all but three of whom died of hunger or typhoid fever during World War I. His parents, poor peasants, were unable to care for him, and he left home in Novgorod very young. He had only seven years of formal education before he went to work at unskilled jobs in various plants; later, during the first years of collectivisation, he became an agronomist, then director of a Machine Tractor Station, and ultimately of a state farm. He began writing only during World War II when he became a military correspondent for the Leningrad *Pravda*.

Kochetov made it the hard way, and his novels are pæans to the proletariat, to men of his own experience. What can such a man feel about the young writers who have recently risen to fame by way of no harder school than the Gorky Literary Institute? I put it to him, and he replied: "This one writes rubbish ... that one has no ideas ... he is also a fraud ... not worth speaking about." As for modernist painters he observed: "I don't know a single person in Russia, but Ehrenburg, who sees anything in abstract art. Take the exhibition of painting at the American fair in Moscow. It was a hall of laughter.... Of course, you are probably just getting to that phase of art now. We went through it and rejected it long ago...."

And what about Pasternak? I had heard rumours in Moscow that *Dr. Zhivago* might soon be published. "I would never want to see that book appear in its present form," he said. "It reminds me of some of the novels published abroad after the revolution by White Russians who were sorry they couldn't continue to live as before." Which novels? I asked. But Kochetov did not remember. "For me, as for the majority of Soviet citizens, the revolution is sacred. What would be your attitude towards a writer like Pasternak who described your countrymen as gangsters? ... But, of course, you foreigners think that *Dr. Zhivago* is wonderful —those who have read it and those who haven't. I can tell you that it is very badly written, although in translation it probably reads better. The language is simply awful and the whole thing is *vranyo*—a lie."

At this point I excused myself. We had been talking for nearly four hours and I was wearied by the hatred in the man, and by the pity I somehow felt for him. We shook hands in the corridor, and he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "You see, I'm not quite so bad as you imagined, am I? Please tell your readers that I don't eat people, that I don't swallow babies in one gulp!"

That evening I had dinner with a group of young intellectuals. I told them about my interview with Kochetov and quoted his final remark. One of the boys said, "It's not true. He does eat people. And he must be awfully hungry after four hours of just talking...."

IF KOCHETOV is the demon of the liberal intelligentsia, Pasternak is their saint. *"They bore him to no entombment/they bore him to enthronement,"* reads Voznesensky's poem to Pasternak.[6] Nearly every young poet or writer I met in Moscow spoke of him with reverence. Hundreds of young people go every week-end to the churchyard in Peredelkino where he is buried under three tall pines. There is a bench facing the grave where they sit reading his verse (or their own) to one another. In the summer great masses of cut flowers—lilacs, roses, daisies —lie beside the grave covered over with purple pansies. Voznesensky calls it "the most serene and beautiful place in the world...."

How widespread is the cult of Pasternak was illustrated for me by an incident I witnessed, quite by accident, in a large Moscow book-shop. A sales-girl informed me that a famous Armenian poet, Ashot Grashi, was about to give

[6] Although this poem, which appears on page 69 of this number, was first published in 1960 in connection with the 50th anniversary of Tolstoy's death, it is obviously dedicated to the memory of Pasternak.

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a recitation of his poems, in connection with a book of Russian translations of his work which had just been published. The reading had not been announced; shoppers who happened to be in the store were simply being invited by the personnel to sit down on folding chairs in the poetry section. Grashi, an amiable-looking man with a great shock of black hair, then read a poem in his own language, and two or three in Russian translation to about fifty shoppers of all ages who evidently had had other plans for the afternoon. I was distressed by their bad manners: some shuffled their feet, others sighed loudly. Even the sales-girls behind the counters chattered on. The applause was perfunctory. Grashi then introduced another amiable-looking man to the audience as the translator of his poetry into Russian, "the man to whom I owe so much... etc." The audience scarcely grew more attentive. Then the translator announced that he would read one Grashi poem "translated not by myself, but by Boris Leonidovich Pasternak." The whole audience rose and applauded, in cadence, for a very long time. They listened to his reading of the Pasternak translation in silence, and rose again when he had finished. Grashi himself stood up, applauded, and then read it to them himself.

WHAT CAN PASTERNAK MEAN to a cross-section of casual browsers in a book-shop? Pride in a man who never compromised himself or his art under Stalin? Identification or sympathy with his suffering? Genuine appreciation for his poetry? For the young writers, at any rate, he signifies all this and more. He is central to one of their most pressing concerns as writers, which is to re-create their own past. Pasternak's forty-seven years of creative work, from 1913 to 1960, bridging as it does the sterile years of Stalinism, represent their link to their literary past. As one writer put it: "Unless we can re-live our life-story which has been denied us until now, we simply cannot get on with our work." The writers are straining to establish some continuity with their past—not back to the 19th century with which they are already surfeited but to the very point at which their literary history was arrested. By way of Pasternak (and Anna Akhmatova as well) they are returning to the masters that are rightfully theirs: Blok, Tsvetayeva, Khlebnikov, Mandelshtam, and, in prose, Babel and Olesha.

For this reason the memoirs of such older writers as Paustovsky and Ehrenburg have aroused among the younger generation an interest quite out of proportion to their documentary value. Yet their evocation of the creative excitement of a period until recently obliterated from history, and their intimate recollections of writers, like Babel and Mandelshtam, long dead in prison, are precious materials for the re-creation of the past. The Ehrenburg memoirs, however, have been received equivocally. Hardly any modern writer, let alone a painter, would deny the important role Ehrenburg has played in restoring some part of the literature and painting of the 1910s and 1920s to Russia. Yet the general feeling among the liberal intelligentsia is that the Ehrenburg memoirs, with their omissions and distortions, have once again cheated them of their history. "I have told the truth," Ehrenburg himself said to me in Moscow, "but not the whole truth."

THE RETURN TO THE PAST is no sentimental journey. What the writers are seeking is a point of departure from which they can proceed to their principal task: to resurrect the language; to restore to words the burden of meaning which has been corrupted by what Pasternak called "the power of the glittering phrase." Not only have such abstract nouns as freedom, justice, and truth been debased, but the language of life itself was extinguished; this is the most terrible of the indictments contained in *Dr. Zhivago*. One young poet in Moscow quoted to me from memory Yuri Zhivago's reflection on the sovereignty of language:

> Language, the home and dwelling of beauty and meaning, itself begins to think and speak for man... then like the current of a mighty river polishing stones and turning wheels by its very movement, the flow of speech creates in passing, by the force of its own laws, rhyme and rhythm and countless other forms and formations, still more important and until now undiscovered, unconsidered, and unnamed.

There is no genuine writer in Russia to-day who is not dedicated to establishing the sovereignty of language over the tyranny of cant.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

THE *translations by W. H. Auden, Stanley Kunitz, and Richard Wilbur were done in close collaboration with Max Hayward, in an attempt to overcome the limitations which bedevil the translation of poetry from less well-known languages such as Russian. The editors feel that these versions, which are very close to the originals, as well as being English poems in their own right, show beyond any doubt that the collaboration between poets who do not know the original language, and a scholar who does, can be remarkably fruitful.*

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Yuri Kazakov

Adam and Eve

THE PAINTER Ageyev was staying at a hotel in a northern town where he had come to paint the fishermen. The town was spaciously laid out; it had broad squares, streets, and avenues, and because of this it looked empty.

It was autumn. Low, ragged clouds came scudding from the west over the grey-brown woods misted with hoar-frost, it rained a dozen times a day, and the lake loomed over the town like a leaden wall. Ageyev stayed late in bed, smoked on an empty stomach, and stared at the window lined and streaming with rain. Below it the roofs of the houses gleamed sullenly, reflecting the sky; the room reeked of tobacco smoke and of something else peculiar to hotel rooms. His head ached, he had a ceaseless buzzing in his ears and an occasional twinge of pain in his heart.

Ageyev had been talented from his childhood up, and now, at twenty-five, his expression was disdainful: there was a disdain, a weariness about the drooping brown eyelids and the lower lip, and his dark eyes were languid and arrogant. He wore a velvet jacket and a beret, and walked with a slouch, his hands in his pockets, hardly seeming to give an inattentive glance to people in the street or indeed to anything he came across in general, but retaining of everying a memory so indestructibly sharp that his breast actually ached with it.

There was nothing for him to do in the town itself and he spent the morning sitting at the table in his room holding his head, or lying down, waiting for twelve o'clock when the bar would open downstairs. When at last it came he walked down unsteadily, and each time looked with hatred at the picture in the hall. The picture showed the nearby lake with its inlets, and an unnaturally orange growth of stunted birches on the ledges of unnaturally purple rocks. It was autumn in the picture as well.

In the bar he ordered a brandy and squinting inwards with the effort of not spilling it slowly drank it down. Having drunk, he lit a cigarette, and looked round at whoever might be there as he waited impatiently for the first jolting warmth which he knew would at once make him feel well, and lovingly disposed to everything—life, people, the town, and even the rain.

After that he would go out and walk about the streets, wondering where to go with Vika, and what to do in general and how to go on living. A couple of hours later he was back in the hotel; by then he was sleepy and he went to bed and slept.

And when he woke up he went down again, to the restaurant. Now the day was nearly over, it was dusk outside the windows, and when evening came the jazz band in the restaurant struck up. Girls with made-up faces came in, sat in pairs at little tables, chewed wax-like chops, drank vermouth, danced with anyone who asked them, and wore an expression of happiness and of intoxication with high-life. Ageyev gazed in misery round the large, familiar, smoke-filled hall. He hated the girls, and the gigolos, and the wretched band with its piercing pipes and thumping drums, and the awful food, and the local vodka which the waitress invariably served short.

At midnight the restaurant closed. Ageyev staggered back to his third floor, wheezed as he fumbled at the keyhole, undressed, made mooing noises, ground his teeth, and pitched headlong into blackness until morning.

THAT DAY was like all the others, but on the next at two o'clock he went to meet Vika's train. He arrived early and, with only

YURI KAZAKOV *is 35, and he surprised some Moscow critics recently by arguing against the idea that "literature has an immediate and direct effect on the life of a man and on his ethics." As for "traditions," the only one he insisted on was "the tradition of being honest to oneself and to the reader. . . ."*

This story was translated by Manya Harari.

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a brief glance at the platform and the passengers with their luggage, went straight into the refreshment room. Yet there had been a time when the mere sight of a railway platform excited him and filled him with wanderlust.

A tall waitress with red hair brought him his vodka.

"What a girl," Ageyev muttered, his eyes following her with greedy pleasure, and when she came up to him again he said: "Hello, baby. You're just what I've been looking for all my life."

The waitress smiled unmoved. She was used to hearing this sort of thing from almost everyone. People would drop in for half an hour and sit muttering—usually vulgarities—never to come back and see the station or the red-haired waitress again.

"I must paint you," said Ageyev, getting tipsy. "I'm an artist."

She shifted the glasses on his table and smiled: she liked hearing it all the same.

"You listen to me, I'm a genius, I'm known in the West! What about it?"

"It is not us the artists come to paint." She spoke with a slightly un-Russian accent.

"How do you know?" He looked at her breast.

"Oh! They always want fishermen. And workmen—signalmen. Or there's a little island with a wooden church—they all go there, they come... from Moscow, from Leningrad. And they're all like you—with berets—that what you call them?"

"They're all idiots. Well, we'll meet again, eh?" he added hurriedly as he heard the sound of the approaching train. "What's your name?"

"If you like. Zhanna."

"You're not Russian, are you?"

"No, I'm a Finn. Yuonaleinen."

"Hell of a name," Ageyev mumbled, finishing his vodka and coughing.

He paid, gave Zhanna's shoulder a squeeze, and walked out on to the platform in high spirits. "What a waste of a woman!" he thought, screwing up his eyes at the light-blue express as its coaches flashed past him. The eye-strain made him feel giddy and he turned away. "Shouldn't have had that drink," he thought absentmindedly and, in a sudden fright at the thought of Vika's arrival, lit a cigarette.

The passengers were already moving from the train to the exit. He sighed, threw the cigarette away, and went to look for Vika. She saw him first and shouted to him. He turned and watched her as she came towards him in her fleecy black coat. The coat swung unfastened and her knees pushing at the hem of her skirt made it billow out.

She shyly gave him her net-gloved hand. Her hair, bleached by the sun, short and ruffled, fell over her forehead. From under it her slanted Tartar eyes looked up at him alarmed, while her mouth was crimson and taut, with dry cracked lips half open like a child's.

"Hello," she said a little breathlessly, and wanted to go on, perhaps to say something gay and clever, prepared in advance, but faltered into silence.

Ageyev unaccountably fixed his eyes on the transparent scarf round her neck, then with a scared schoolboy expression snatched her shiny suitcase from her, and together they walked down the wide street from the station.

"Your face is a bit puffy somehow..." she said. "How are you getting on?" She looked around her. "I like it here."

"Ugh!" He made the unpleasant guttural sound he always used to express contempt.

"Have you been drinking?" She pushed her hands into her pockets and bent her head. Her hair fell forward.

"Ugh!" he said again, with a side-glance at Vika.

Vika was very pretty and about her clothes, her ruffled hair, her way of speaking, there was something elusively Muscovite to which he had become unused in the north. In Moscow they had only met a couple of times, they didn't know each other properly, and her arrival, the leave he knew she had wangled with difficulty, and the fact—which he also sensed—that she was ready for anything, all struck him as somehow unexpected and strange.

"I'm lucky with women," he thought with pleased surprise, and deliberately stopped as if to put on his gloves, but really to look at Vika from the back. She slowed down, half-turning and looking at him questioningly, then glanced round absent-mindedly at the shops and the passers-by.

She was pretty from the back as well, and the fact that she had not walked on but slowed down with that interrogative glance which seemed in itself to express her dependence on him—all this pleased him enormously, even though a moment ago he had felt embarrassed and confused by her arrival. He vaguely realised that he had only had that drink to get rid of his embarrassment.

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"I've brought you your press cuttings," said Vika when he had caught up with her. "You know they're giving you hell? There was a terrific row going on at the exhibition the day I went."

"Ugh!" he said again, though with profound satisfaction, adding in immediate alarm: "They haven't taken down the *Kolkhoz Girl*?"

"No, it's still up," Vika laughed. "Nobody can make head or tail of it, they're all shouting and arguing—the boys with the beards and the jeans, they don't know where they are, they're going round in circles."

"And you, do you like it?"

Vika smiled vaguely, and Ageyev, suddenly furious, frowned and snorted, pouting his lower lip, his dark eyes lazy and sullen. "I'll get drunk," he decided.

And all that day he walked about the town with Vika like a stranger, yawned, mumbled indistinguishable answers to her questions, waited at the pier while she found out the times of the steamers, and in the evening got drunk, hard as she begged him not to, locked himself in his room, and, while knowing with deep, acute pain that she was alone in hers, upset and bewildered, only smoked and sniggered to himself. And thought about red-haired Zhanna.

The telephone rang a couple of times. He knew it was Vika, but let it ring. "Go chase yourself, you silly goose," he thought furiously.

THE NEXT DAY Vika woke Ageyev early and made him wash and dress while she packed his rucksack herself, dragged his paintbox, easel, and fishing tackle from under the bed, looked in the desk drawers, clinked empty bottles, and was generally aloof and businesslike, paying him no attention whatever.

"Just like a wife," thought Ageyev, watching her in amazement. He scowled and thought how quickly a woman could get used to a man and become as cold and masterful as if they had been living together for ages.

He had a headache and wanted to go down to the bar but, remembering it wouldn't yet be open, coughed, grunted, lit a cigarette on an empty stomach, and felt still worse. Meanwhile Vika had been down and paid the bill and called a taxi. "Oh hell, let her," he thought dully, going out and getting into it. He sat back and closed his eyes. The early morning rain meant that it would rain all day. It even began to snow, the heavy, wet flakes falling fast and turning black almost before the first touch of the wet roofs and pavements.

At the pier Ageyev felt worse than ever. Overcome with misery, half asleep and without an idea of why or where he was going, he listened drowsily to the wind hooting and whistling, water smacking the landing steps, motor-boats starting up on a high note, spluttering and dying down. Vika too had quite lost her spirits and was sad and cold as she sat beside him looking round helplessly, wilting in her short tight trousers and still bareheaded. The wind ruffled her hair and blew it over her forehead, and she looked as if she had just received a telegram and were going to a funeral.

"She would wear trousers," Ageyev thought spitefully, closing his eyes and trying to make himself comfortable against the wooden partition. "Where the devil am I off to? God, how awful I feel!"

They could hardly wait for their boat and watched impatiently as it pulled alongside, hissing, steaming, pounding, creaking against the pier and scraping white shavings off its timber stanchions.

Even when they went aboard Ageyev felt no better. Somewhere down below, where it blissfully seethed and rumbled, yellow pistons going up and down in hot oil, it was warm, but the forward cabin was gloomy, cold, and had a musty smell. The wind howled, the waves splashed against the sides of the ship, and glasses tinkled nervously as it gently lurched. Brown, thinned-out woods, villages darkened by the rain, buoys and battered markers drifted slowly past the bleary portholes. Ageyev shivered feverishly and went out.

After wandering about on the ribbed metal flooring of the lower deck, he found shelter next to the engine room and close to the restaurant. The restaurant was not yet open, although an evil smell came from the salt cod cooking in the galley. Ageyev climbed on to the warm top of a metal bunker, leaned against a stack of birch logs glossy in their satin bark, and listened to the measured sighing of the engine, the splashing of the paddles and the discordant voices of the passengers. As usual those who were still excited by their send-off were gabbling noisily and cracking jokes, while from the stern came the sounds of a concertina, shouts, and the loud tapping of heels on the iron deck.

Near the hot water tap tea was being brewed in mugs and teapots, and people sat on bundles and suitcases, drinking it and breaking pieces

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off French rolls, glancing out, warm and cosy, at the dark dishevelled waves which the wind chased across the lake. Women were taking off their kerchiefs and doing their hair, children had already settled down to play and were running and bustling about.

The lights went on, yellow through frosted glass, and at once it became still more dark and cold outside. Ageyev idly shifted his gaze. The gangways were cluttered up with sacks of potatoes, hampers, barrels of gherkins and bales of other stuff. The passengers were all people from the neighbourhood, making their way to some place or other up the coast, and their talk was all of local things: cattle, new regulations, mothers-in-law, fishing, the lumber camps, and the weather.

"It doesn't matter!" thought Ageyev. "It's only one day—then the island, a cottage, silence and solitude.... It doesn't matter!"

The restaurant opened at last, and immediately Vika pushed her way towards him through the crowd. She gave him a sad look and a smile.

"Want a drink, you poor dear?" she said. "Well go along and get it!"

Ageyev went and came back with a small bottle and some bread and gherkins. Vika, who had climbed on to the bunker, met him with a look of attentive concern. He sat down next to her, worked the cork out of the bottle, took a pull at it and munched a gherkin. Feeling better, he turned to her with a certain animation.

"Eat!" he mumbled, and Vika too began to eat.

"Tell me, what's the matter with you?" she asked after a while.

Ageyev had another drink and thought a while. Then he lit a cigarette and looked down at the suede shoe dangling from Vika's foot.

"Just fed up, old girl," he said quietly. "I expect I'm just no good as an artist and a fool as well. Here I am painting on and on with everybody telling me it's no good, it's all wrong. ... What do they say? 'Ideological immaturity!' 'On a slippery slope!' 'A spirit alien to our people!'... As if the whole nation were behind them nodding in agreement. You know?"

"You're silly!" Vika said gently. She suddenly laughed and put her head on his shoulder. Her hair had a bitter, strange smell. Ageyev rubbed his cheek against it and shut his eyes.

Suddenly she was close and dear to him. He remembered the first time he kissed her in Moscow, in the passage at the flat of an artist friend. He had arrived a little drunk and gay, Vika was quiet and looked bewildered; they had had a long talk in the kitchen, or rather he had talked to her, telling her he was a genius and no one else was any good. Then they went to join the others and in the passage he kissed her and told her he was terribly in love with her.

She didn't believe him but she caught her breath and blushed, her eyes dark and her lips dry, and began to chatter and laugh with some other girls who were there without looking at him again. He too stuck to the men, arguing about some drawings or other, and he and Vika sat in different rooms.

Vika talked and giggled with her girl-friends and with someone who kept coming in and going out, feeling happy because he was in the next room sitting in an armchair and, like her, making conversation with someone. She told him so afterwards.

It was good now, in this out-of-the-way place in the north, suddenly to remember that recent yet forever vanished evening. It meant that they had a past. They did not yet really love each other, nothing bound them together, they were still seeing other people who had been in their lives before, they had never spent a night together, they still didn't know one another. But they already had a past, and this was good.

"Seriously," said Ageyev, "out here I've kept on thinking about my life. You know it was horrid here without you, pouring with rain and nowhere to go. I sat in my room or downstairs, drunk, and kept brooding.... I've just about had enough. When I was at art school I used to imagine I'd turn everything upside down, I'd knock them all sideways with my painting. I'd travel, I'd live in a cave—like a sort of Rockwell Kent, you know. Then I got my diploma and at once they started on me—'You bastard, you so-and-so!'—preaching at me. They haven't stopped hounding me ever since, the swine. And the longer it goes on the worse it gets. 'You abstractionist, you neo-realist, you formalist, you've got this and that deviation—just you wait, we'll get you!'..."

He moved a little aside from her and had another drink. His headache had stopped, and he felt like sitting and talking and thinking on and on, because Vika was sitting next to him and listening. He looked at her out of the corner of his eyes—her face was alive and grave, the

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eyes under their shadow of lashes long and black. He looked closer—they really were black, and her lips were rough, and Ageyev's heart began to thump. As for Vika, she had tucked up her feet on the bunker, unfastened her coat, propped her chin on her knees and was gazing into his face.

"You're not looking well," she said, touching his chin. "You haven't shaved, you're so shadowy."

"I'm kind of stale," he grinned and looked away at the lake. "I keep on thinking about myself and Van Gogh.... Do I really have to kick the bucket too before they take me seriously? As if my colours, my drawing, my figures weren't as good as theirs. All those opportunists—I'm sick of the whole business!"

"You don't expect time-servers to admit you're any good," she said quickly, as though by the way.

"Why not?"

"I just know.... For them to recognise you they'd have to recognise they've been wrong all their lives."

"Oh!" Ageyev lit a cigarette and smoked it in silence, looking at his feet and rubbing his face; the stubble on his sallow cheeks scraped against his fingers. "Three years!" he said. "And I'm still doing illustrations to earn my keep. Three years since I finished art school, and there are good-for-nothings who envy me: 'Ah, he's famous! Ah, he's known in the West....' Idiots. If they only knew. Every picture I do.... And I still haven't a studio. You paint a spring landscape—it's the wrong spring! It isn't nature, it's biology! they say. What do you think of that? You can't get into a show, the selection committees make your life a misery, and if you do get in with something unimportant it's still worse. And the reviewers! They rave about being modern, but what they understand by it is beneath contempt. And the lies they tell, and if they do say a word of truth it's only for a demagogic end!"

"And has there never been a word of truth said about you?" She broke off a sliver of birch and nibbled it thoughtfully.

"Oh you!" Ageyev went pale. "You little college girl! You're still on the sidelines, you haven't run foul of them, you've got your books, your dialectical materialism, your field-work.... If they say 'man,' it has to be with a capital M. Their enlightened gaze sees nothing but Man as a Whole—the country, whole millennia, the cosmos! One individual is no good to them. They don't think about him. You have to give them millions. They hide behind the millions, and we, those of us who are something, we're beatniks.... Spiritual teddy-boys, that's what we are! We haven't a heroic style!" He laughed unpleasantly. "We don't portray the masses! There they are, the masses," Ageyev nodded at the passengers. "And I love them, and it makes me sick to drool over them in ecstasy. I love them in the flesh—their eyes, their hands—see? Because it's they who hold up the earth. That's the whole point. If everyone is good, then society is good as well, that's what I'm telling you! I think about it day and night. I'm in a bad way, I've no commissions, no money. To hell with it, I don't mind. What matters is that I'm right all the same, and let nobody try to teach me. It's life that teaches me—and as for being optimistic and believing in the future and in those masses they go on about—I can give a hundred yards start to any one of those critics."

He snorted, his nostrils flared, and his eyes clouded.

"It's bad for you to drink..." Vika said softly, looking up at him with pity.

"Wait a second!" Ageyev said hoarsely. "I've got something the matter with me... asthma or something. Can't breathe properly."

His cigarette had gone out, he lit it and inhaled but had a fit of coughing and threw it down, putting one foot on the floor to stamp it out. He looked at Vika and made a face.

"Get out of the way, I'm going to bed!" He blinked angrily, got off the bunker and went below.

WHILE THEY WERE talking the heating had been turned on, the cabin was warm and the porthole had steamed over. Sitting beside it, Ageyev rubbed the glass with his sleeve; his left eyelid was twitching. He knew that Vika was now his salvation. But there was something about her that infuriated him. She had come to him... fresh, pretty, in love—oh hell! Why, why did he always have to be arguing and proving something or other? And to her of all people! To Vika, who had come all that way, her heart turning over and her knees weak at the thought of their first night together, of him, of holding him close to her, and he the drunken devil.... Oh God! And it would all have been all right, perfect—

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if only she had agreed with him at once, if she had said, "Yes, you're right!" He would have gone out of his mind with joy, he would have carried her off to the lake, to a cottage, he would have sat her by the window and rushed to his canvas. Her tiny face, her slanted eyes and sun-bleached hair, her chin propped on her fist.... He might never paint anything better in his life! Oh God!

He began to take off his clothes, feeling lonely and sorry for himself to the point of tears. "What the hell," he thought, "it doesn't matter! It isn't the first time!" He shuddered at the things he had said to her. He must work, not talk.

When he was undressed he climbed on to the upper bunk and turned to the wall, but even then went on moving his head about restlessly on the shiny pillow-case, unable to settle down.

It was evening by the time the steamer neared the island. A brief sunset, dim and remote, burnt itself out, and dusk was falling as the boat nosed its way through countless reefs. They could now see the church with its many domes; as they drew closer to the island it shifted on the horizon, now right, now left, and at one moment was behind them.

Vika had a stubborn, hurt face. Ageyev whistled between his teeth, glancing indifferently from side to side at the flat islands and the villages, and inspecting with some interest the splendid boats which looked like Viking sailing ships.

When they came right up to the island, they saw a windmill and a beautiful ancient farmhouse with its outbuildings and barns—all empty and without a sign of life, like pieces in a museum. Ageyev grinned.

"Just the right thing for me," he muttered, looking at Vika with rage. "Right in the forefront of the seven-year plan as you might say —no?"

Vika said nothing. Her expression was now withdrawn as if she had planned it all in advance and come on her own and found everything as expected.

No one except the two of them landed on the island. And there was no one on the open wooden landing-stage except an old woman with a lantern shining, although it was still daylight.

"Well, here we are, you and I, like Adam and Eve." Ageyev grinned again, stepping down on the damp planks of the jetty.

Vika again made no reply.

A woman in a wadded coat and boots appeared on the bank, smiling in welcome while she was still far off.

"Only the two of you?" she shouted gaily as she hurried towards them, shifting her eyes from one to the other. When she came up to them she took Vika's suitcase from her and talked to them as if they were long-expected guests.

"Well, thank goodness," she rattled on in her friendly voice, climbing up the bank. "I was beginning to think no one else would come this year, the season was over, time to dig in for the winter, and now you've come. I'll take you to our hotel."

"Hotel?" Ageyev asked in his disagreeable voice.

The woman laughed.

"They all say that, they're all surprised, though it's more than a year since I came. Had my old man with me but he died. Now I'm alone. Certainly there's a hotel! For tourists and artists and people like that. There's a lot of them come in the summer and stay on and paint."

Thinking of his misery at the hotel, Ageyev sighed and screwed up his face. He had been looking forward to a cottage, a small farmhouse with a smell of cows and a porch and an attic.

But the hotel turned out to be attractive. There was a big stove in the kitchen, and three bedrooms—all empty, and another very odd room with slender pillars down the middle, carved and painted in old-Russian style, supporting the ceiling, and big modern windows reaching to the floor on three sides, as in a glassed-in hall.

In every bedroom there were bare beds showing their webbing and bare bedside tables of rough wood.

Ageyev and Vika chose a room with a stove and a window to the south. Framed water colours hung on the walls. Ageyev glanced at them and twitched his lip. They were painstaking student sketches of either the church or the windmill.

The landlady kept going in and out carrying sheets, pillows, and pillow-cases, and with them came a good smell of clean linen.

"Well, now you can settle down," she said, pleased. "That's nice. I get bored all by myself. It's nice in summer with all those jolly painters, but now there's hardly another soul on the island."

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"How do we manage about food?" asked Vika.

"Oh, you won't starve," she shouted cheerfully from somewhere down the passage. "There's a village at the other end of the island, you can get milk and things, or there's a shop on Pog Island, you can go by boat. Are you from Leningrad?"

"No, Moscow," said Vika.

"Well, that's nice, we get Leningraders. I've plenty of logs and kindling—they were restoring the church last summer, a lot of stuff was left over. And I've got the keys of the church. When you want to go just tell me and I'll open it up."

The landlady went away and Vika, happy and tired, flopped on her bed.

"It's too good to be true!" she said. "It really is! It's brilliant of you, my darling Adam. Do you like baked potatoes?"

Ageyev smirked, twitched his lip and went out. He walked quietly past the graveyard round the church. It had grown dark and, as he walked towards it from the east, the church towered above him with its magnificent silhouette, luminous in the spaces between its onion domes and in the open arches of its belfry. Two birds were calling to each other from different places in measured, monotonous voices, and there was a strong smell of grass and of autumn cold.

"It's the end of the world," thought Ageyev as he passed the church and came to the lake. He went down to the landing-stage and sat on a bollard, looking at the west. A couple of hundred yards away there was another island, flat and bare except for willow bushes. Beyond it lay still another, and there seemed to be a village: a lone light shone far off through the trees. Soon a motor-boat started up on a high thin note somewhere over there, and went on and on, then suddenly spluttered out.

Ageyev felt lonely, but he sat on smoking, getting used to the silence and the clean smell of the autumn freshness and the water, thinking about himself, about his pictures, thinking that he was a messiah, a great artist, and that here he was, all alone at the end of the world, whereas various critics who lived in Gorky Street in Moscow were at this moment sitting with girls in restaurants, drinking brandy, eating roast chicken, wiping their greasy lips with their napkins and uttering various fine and lofty words, and that everything they said was a lie, because they weren't thinking about lofty things but only about getting the girls into bed. And in the mornings they would take coffee for their hangover and drops for their heart condition, and write articles about him, and again tell lies, because not one of them believed in what he wrote but only thought of how much he would get for it, and not one of them had ever sat in solitude on a damp pier, looking at a dark, uninhabited island and preparing for creative achievement.

These thoughts were both sad and comforting: there was a bitter sweetness in them. He enjoyed making such reflections and he often did.

At one moment he found himself mentally humming the tune, remembered out of the blue, of the old Countess's solo in *The Queen of Spades*. And this ghostly music—which he heard somewhere deep inside him with all its orchestral accompaniment including the sinister note of the clarinets and the bassoons and the painful suspense of the pauses—began to terrify him because it was death.

Then, as suddenly and sharply, to the point of pain, like the longing for air, he felt a longing for the smell of tea—not brewed tea, not tea in a glass, but dry tea leaves. At once there came to him straight out of his childhood, the memory of a milky glass teapot with a touching landscape painted on it, and his dream of living in the little house with the red roof, and the dry rustling sound as his mother took the lid off the teapot and poured the tea leaves in, and the smell as the cloudy-opal teapot filled with darkness.

This immediately made him remember his mother, her love for him, her life lived in him and for him. And himself, so quick and lively, with moments of such unaccountable joy and vitality that he could hardly believe that this could ever have been himself.

With belated pain he thought of how often he had been rude, inconsiderate, and unfeeling towards his mother, how rarely, while he had the chance, he had been willing to listen to her childhood stories of a remote, long-vanished past. Of how little, in his childish selfishness, he had appreciated the constancy of her love, a love such as he had never since experienced from anyone in all his life.

And remembering all this, he at once began to doubt himself and to think that perhaps his critics were right and he was wrong and was doing nothing as it should be done. He thought

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that all his life some basic idea—an idea in the highest sense—must have been lacking in him. That he had all too often, talented as he was, looked down with lazy indifference on everything except his talent and his life—and this at *such a time!*

With helpless rage he remembered all the arguments he had had, ever since his student days, with painters, with art experts, with whoever would not accept his view of painting, colour, design. He thought now that the reason he could not convince them, rout them, prove to them his messianic role, was that he lacked the inspiration of an idea. How indeed could you have a prophet without an idea?

SO HE SAT for a long time. Vika came out of the house, walked a little way along the wooden boards towards the shore, stood looking around her and called him in a low voice. He heard her but neither moved nor spoke. And yet he loved her, his heart quickened at the thought of her. And the two of them were like Adam and Eve, alone with the stars and the water on this dark uninhabited island—and it was not for nothing that she had come to him, and how miserable she must have been in that hotel room when he had drunk himself into a stupor and gone away, deserting her!

A bitter alienation, an estrangement from the world came over him and he wanted nothing and no one. He remembered that wild animals when they are sick go off and hide in some faraway place in the forest, there to cure themselves by means of some mysterious herb or else to die. He regretted that it was the fall and the weather was so chilly, that he was in boots and a sweater—how nice, if it were summer, to find a corner of this or some other island, with rocks, sand, and clear water, and to lie all day in the sun and to think of nothing. And to walk barefoot. And fish. And watch sunsets. He realised that he was boundlessly weary —of himself, his thoughts, his corroding doubts, of getting drunk—and that altogether he was ill.

"Nice to go to the south, somewhere by the sea..." he thought nostalgically as he got up. Leaving the pier and turning his back on the lake, he again came face to face with the enormous ancient church and the small hotel sheltering beside it. The windows of the hotel shone brightly while the church was dark, locked up, and strange to him. Yet there was something masterful and commanding about the church, something which aroused thoughts of history and of the greatness of the people—and also of quietness and solitude.

"Seg-Pogost,"[1] he recalled the name of the island and the church. *"Seg-Pogost."*

He walked up to the house and stood on the steps, peering into the darkness, trying to guess at what for so many centuries without him had lived its own life—the genuine life of the earth, the water, and the people. But he could make out nothing except the dim radiance of the surrounding waters and the few cosmically gleaming tatters of sky in the rifts between the clouds, and so he went inside.

The room was brightly lit by a kerosene lamp. The stove roared and crackled and there was a smell of baked potatoes. Vika was flushed and busy, the whole place had acquired a friendly, lived-in air, and everything in it—the blouses and dresses hanging up or flung on the bed, the black gloves on the bedside table, the powder compact with a zip—told of the presence of a young woman and gave off a smell of scent.

"Where were you?" Vika asked with a quiver of her eyebrows. "I looked for you."

Ageyev said nothing and went into the kitchen to wash. There he spent some time inspecting his stubble in the mirror but decided not to shave and only washed, cheerfully clattering the things on the washstand and drying himself on the warm rough towel; then he came back, lay down, put his boots on the headboard, stretched, and lit a cigarette.

"Come and eat," said Vika.

They ate in silence. Clearly Vika was delighted with her surroundings and her only trouble was Ageyev. The kettle purred and whistled on the stove.

"How long is your leave?" Ageyev asked abruptly.

"Ten days," Vika sighed. "Why?"

"Nothing...."

"Three days gone," thought Ageyev.

Again there was a long silence. When they had their tea it was time for bed. Vika blushed hotly and looked in desperation at Ageyev. He looked away and frowned, then got up, lit a cigarette, and walked over to the window. He too was blushing and glad that Vika could not see it. There were rustling sounds behind him; finally Vika couldn't stand it and begged him:

[1] *Seg:* a Finnish corruption of St. Serge; *Pogost:* churchyard.

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"Do put out the light!"

Without looking at her, Ageyev blew out the flame of the oil lamp, quickly undressed, got into his bed and turned to the wall. "Just try and come to me," he thought. But Vika didn't come. She lay so still that he couldn't even hear her breathing.

Some twenty minutes went by; neither of them was asleep and they both knew it. It was dark in the room and the sky outside the window was black. The wind rose and buffetted the walls. Suddenly the window curtain was lit up for a brief moment. Ageyev thought at first that someone had walked past and shone a torch on the wall and the window, but a few seconds later there came a low rumble of thunder.

"There's a storm," Vika said softly, sitting up in bed and looking at the dark window. "An autumn storm."

After another flash and rumble, the wind died down and it began at once to pelt with rain, water gurgled in the rainpipe.

"It's raining," said Vika. "I like it when it rains. I like thinking when it rains."

"You couldn't keep quiet, could you?" Ageyev lit a cigarette and blinked: his eyes were smarting.

"You know what? I'm leaving," said Vika, and Ageyev felt her hating him. "I'm going by the first boat. You're nothing but an egoist. I've been thinking and thinking these past two days—what are you? What's the matter with you? Well, I know now—you're just selfish. You talk about the people, about art, but all you think about is yourself and absolutely no one else.... You don't need anyone. It's revolting! Why on earth did you ask me to come, why? I know why—to pat you on the back and say, 'yes, darling,' isn't that it? Well, my lad, you can look for another victim. I'm ashamed to think how I pestered the Dean of the Faculty and told lies about my father being ill...."

She burst into loud sobs.

"Shut up, you fool!" Ageyev said miserably, realising it was all over. "And get out of here, go away, the sooner the better!"

He got up and sat in front of the window, leaning his elbows on the bedside table. It was still raining and there was something large, dark and quivering on the ground outside—he looked at it for a long time before he realised it was a puddle. He wanted to cry, to blink his eyes and rub them with his sleeve as he did when he was a child, but it was many years since he'd been able to cry.

VIKA HAD BURIED her head in her pillow and lay sobbing and catching her breath, while Ageyev sat still, breaking match-sticks and crumbling cigarette ends in the ash-tray. At first he had felt sick and cold with misery and disgust. Now this had passed, he had somehow risen above it, aloof, detached from pettiness, and feeling sorry for everyone, quiet and saddened by the insurmountable resistance of the human mass. And yet everything deep inside him was boiling, seething, hurt, and he could not be silent, he could no longer smile his condescending smile or get out of things with his loathsome "Ugh!" he had to say something.

But he said nothing, he only thought, though he wasn't really thinking about anything, only keeping quiet and glancing through the window at the dark, quivering puddle outside. There was a singing, a jangling in his head as if he were ill and had a temperature, and he saw before him an endless procession of people walking silently through the halls of a gallery, their expressions enigmatic, elusive, and sorrowful. "Why sorrowful?" he was held up by the thought; "I've got it wrong somehow." But he was at once distracted and began to think of loftier things, of the highest, the loftiest of all, as it seemed to him.

He was thinking that whatever happened he would do what he must. And that no one would stop him. And that in the end this would be credited to him.

He stood up, and without dressing, with swollen veins in his temples, went out on to the porch. There he stood and spat—for some reason his mouth was full of sweetish saliva, it kept filling with it and he kept spitting it out, and there was a lump in his throat, choking him.

"It's all over!" he muttered softly. "To hell with it. It's all over."

ALL NEXT DAY Ageyev slumped on his bed with his face to the wall. He would go to sleep and wake up and hear Vika walk about the room and round the house. She called him to lunch and to dinner but he lay with his teeth angrily clenched and not opening his eyes, in a kind of stupor, until he fell asleep again.

By the evening his muscles were aching and he was forced to get up. Vika was out; Ageyev went to find the landlady.

"Would you give me the key of the boat," he begged her. "I have to go to the shop for some cigarettes."

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The landlady gave him the key of the padlock, told him where to find the oars, and showed him the direction in which to row.

There was a headwind, the oars were heavy and awkward, the boat was heavy too though so fine to look at, and Ageyev had blisters on his hands by the time he reached the other island.

He bought cigarettes, a bottle of vodka, and some snacks, and walked back to the mooring-stage.

As he was crossing the water-meadow he was overtaken by a stocky, bow-legged fisherman in a winter hat and with a red face.

"Hello, there," said the fisherman, drawing level with him and looking him over. "You an artist? From Seg-Pogost?"

He had parcels wrapped in newspaper which he held carefully in both hands and two bottles of vodka stuffed in the pockets of his jacket.

"We've got a party on to-day! After our steam bath," he gave the news joyfully as to an old friend. "Shall we have one for the road?"

The fisherman clumped across into his boat which had an outboard-motor with a bright-green casing, produced four bottles (two out of his trouser pockets), and carefully put three of them down on the tarpaulin in the prow; the fourth he opened at once and after fumbling for an empty jam jar and rinsing it in the lake poured Ageyev a drink. Ageyev drank it down and chewed a biscuit. The fisherman poured one out for himself and climbed ashore.

"Glad to know you," he said cheerfully. "Been here long?"

"Only since yesterday," said Ageyev, inspecting him deliberately.

"Painting the church?" he winked.

"Whatever I find."

"You should come over and visit our work-gang," the fisherman offered, the vodka rushing to his head. "Got a woman with you? We've got women," he spread his hands, "like that! See? You'll want to paint the lot, see?"

He went back to the boat for the bottle they had started and poured Ageyev another drink.

"Let's finish it up, shall we?"

"Actually, I've got my own," said Ageyev, also getting out a bottle.

"We'll drink yours when you come to us," said the fisherman. "It's not far; you just say when you want to come and we'll fetch you by motor-boat. We like artists, they're all right. We had a professor from Leningrad staying a while back. He said, never in my life, he said, have I seen people like you!" The fisherman roared with laughter. "We'll give you fish soup —gwyniad fish, know it? You'll have a good time, when the girls start making a row it goes on all night. It's a fine life."

"Where do you fish?" asked Ageyev smiling.

"Off Kizhm Island, but don't worry, we'll fetch you. Or if you think of coming over by yourself just ask for Stepan's gang—that's me, Stepan, get it? Soon as you're out of the reefs, turn left, past the lighthouse, and you'll see the island. You can't miss it. There they'll tell you."

"I'll certainly come!" Ageyev said happily.

"That's right! You come along! You respect me, right? You treat me like a human being, right? Well, that's all there is to it! That's the lot.... That's settled then. Right? Well, that's all. Good-bye for now, I've got to run, the boys are waiting...."

He climbed over into his boat, unmoored it, pushed off, and started the engine. It set up a thin buzzing. He threw himself into the bows but they reared up all the same; using the tiller the fisherman steered the boat into deep water and skimmed away, leaving a white frothing arc on the water behind him.

SMILING TO himself, Ageyev got into his boat and started back. He now sat facing the sunset and he couldn't help stopping and resting on his oars from time to time, to watch the colours of the sky and the lake. Half-way to Seg-Pogost there was a small island, and when he rounded it the wind died down and the water lay still and heavy like molten gold.

In the perfect silence and the calm Ageyev shipped his oars and turned round to look at the church. A rain-cloud, almost like a black wall, rose in the east, while from the west the sun was shedding its last rays, and everything they lit—the island, the church, the windmill, the old farm—seemed, against the cloud, to glow with a particularly ominous red. Far away on the side of the horizon from which the cloud was moving, hung tattered drapes of rain and a huge rainbow shone funereally.

Ageyev settled himself more comfortably in the boat, had another drink, and nibbling a biscuit sat looking at the church. The sun was setting, the cloud was drawing nearer, it already overshadowed almost everything in sight, the rain had by now reached Seg-Pogost. The boat was drifting slightly with the current.

But around Ageyev all was as yet calm and still, while in the west the sky burned with a

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wide band of misty red flung around the setting sun.

Ageyev sat examining the church and felt like painting it. He was thinking that it was not, of course, only three centuries old, but immeasurably older; it was as old as the earth and the stones. The other thing he couldn't get out of his mind was the image of the jolly fisherman, and he felt like painting him as well.

When he turned to the west the sun had set. The rain had come at last. He pulled his hood over his head and picked up the oars. The heavy rain was for some reason warm and gay, and fish jumped all around him as he rowed.

Coming up to the landing-stage at full tilt, Ageyev saw Vika. She stood motionless in the rain, a transparent raincoat thrown over her shoulders, and watched him as he moored and padlocked the boat, took out the oars and the rucksack with his purchases and stuffed the half-empty bottle into his pocket.

"You can look!" Ageyev thought cheerfully as he walked in silence to the house.

Vika stayed at the pier. Without turning to look at him she continued to watch the lake in the afterglow and the rain.

Coming into the warm room Ageyev saw that her things were no longer around and her suitcase stood by the door. "Ah!" he said, and lay down. The rain drummed on the roof. Calm and comfortable after his vodka, he shut his eyes and dozed off. He soon woke up; it was not yet dark but the rain had stopped and the sky had cleared and had a cold, high radiance.

Ageyev yawned and went to find the landlady. Taking from her the keys of the church, he went inside the fence which surrounded the churchyard, crossed it, stepping between old tombs, unlocked the door of the bell tower, and started up the dark, narrow, creaking stairs.

There was a smell of jackdaw droppings and of dry wood, and it was dark, but the higher he climbed the more light there was and the cleaner the air. At last he reached the platform of the belfry, his heart wobbly and his legs weak from the sensation of height.

At first, as he climbed on to the platform through the trap-door, he saw only the sky through the arches—high up, with a few fleecy clouds in it and the first large stars, and with light in its depth from the blue rays of the long-extinguished sun.

Then as he looked down he saw another sky, as enormous and as light as the one above. Stretching to the horizon on all sides, the whole immeasurable mass of the surrounding water was luminous with reflected light, and the small islands on it were like clouds.

FROM THE MOMENT Ageyev sat down on the balustrade, his arm hooked round a pillar, he never moved again until it was quite dark and the Cassiopeia constellation stood out in all its pearly brilliance, and later, after he came down, he walked round and round the church along the path, peering at it this way and that and sighing.

When he came home, the stove was crackling once again. Vika was cooking supper, but she was quiet and already far away.

"Is the boat coming soon? Did you find out?" asked Ageyev.

"At eleven, I think," Vika said, after a silence.

Ageyev's heart lurched, he wanted to say something, to ask her some question, but he said nothing and only dragged his paint-box from under the bed, set out paint tubes and small bottles of turpentine on the window-sill and the bed, sorted his brushes, and began to knock at a set of stretchers. Vika kept glancing at him in amazement.

They sat down to supper in silence like the first time, and looked each other in the eyes. Ageyev saw Vika's dry lips, her face suddenly so dear to him. His heart gave another lurch and he realised that the time to say good-bye had come.

He got a bottle of vodka from under the bed and poured out for Vika and himself.

"Well..." he said huskily, and cleared his throat. "Here's to our parting!"

Vika put down her glass without drinking, leaned back in her chair and thus, with her head thrown back, looked at him from under lowered eyelids. Her face was quivering, a vein was throbbing in her neck, her lips moved, it was more than Ageyev could bear to see. He felt hot. Getting up, he opened the window and leaned out for a breath of the strong night air.

"It's stopped raining," he said, coming back to the table and taking another drink. "It isn't raining any more."

"You don't need any money?" asked Vika. "I've got too much. I brought a lot, you know, thinking...." She bit her lip and smiled pitifully.

"No, I don't," said Ageyev. "I'll stop drinking now."

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"I still think you're wrong," Vika said sadly. "You're just ill. If you gave up drinking everything would go right."

"Oh, would it," he grinned. "I'd have a one-man show at once, would I? Cheers!" He drank again. "And the opportunists would realise they're no artists, right?"

"Where were you this evening?" Vika asked, after a silence.

"Over there," he gestured vaguely. "Upstairs. Calling on God."

"You won't be coming to Moscow soon?" she asked again, looking at the paints, brushes, and easels scattered round the room.

"Not yet, no," he said, seeing in his imagination the fisherwomen he would get to know, their legs, their breasts. Their eyes. Seeing them at their work, with clenched teeth and red arms as they hauled the nets. "In about a month, I should think. Or later still. I'll have a go at painting the fisherfolk. And the water." He paused. "And the sky. That's how it is, old girl."

Vika went outside to listen for the boat.

"It's too early," she said, coming back. After looking at herself thoughtfully in the mirror she got her scarf out of her suitcase, put it on her head and tied the ends under her chin. Then she sat down and clenched her hands between her knees. She sat in silence, her head bowed low, as if she were sitting at a station, as if Ageyev were unknown to her; her thoughts were far away. Her hair had golden lights under the chiffon scarf. Ageyev lay on the bed, squinting, examining her with curiosity and smoking nervously.

"I can't stand it," said Vika with a sigh. "I'll go to the pier."

She got up, sighing again, stared for a few seconds fixedly, unblinking, at the lamp, and put on her coat. Ageyev swung his legs to the floor and sat up.

"Well, all right," he said. "*Good-bye,*[2] old girl! Like me to see you off? . . ."

Vika went to get her identity card from the landlady. Ageyev took a quick drink, snorted, pulled a face and began to dress, looking attentively at his shaking hands and hearing Vika's and the landlady's voices behind the partition. He picked up the suitcase and went out on to the porch. The steps, the handrail, the plankway to the pier, were still damp from the recent rain. He waited for Vika to come out and walked down. She followed him, her heels tapping on the planks.

WHEN THEY CAME to the pier Ageyev put the suitcase on the ground and Vika immediately sat down on it, shrank into herself, and froze into stillness. Ageyev shivered with cold and turned up his collar. Suddenly, out of the dead, unnatural silence of the night there came the high, robust sound of a plane. As it approached, it grew louder, stronger, but at the same time lower in tone, more velvety, muffled, as if someone were ceaselessly drawing a bow over the strings of a cello, gradually lowering the peg, until at last it receded, dying down to a low belly rumble.

Once again there was dead silence. After stamping about next to Vika, Ageyev moved away and climbed the bank. He paused at the top, then walked a few steps towards the southern tip of the island and looked round.

The stars were burning steadily overhead, while all over the reefs on the water below were small red and white lights gleaming and blinking on buoys and markers. Suddenly it was as if a breath rushed through the sky; the stars blinked and shuddered. The sky grew black, shuddered again and rose, filling with blue trembling light. Ageyev turned to look at the north and immediately saw its origin. From behind the church—from behind its silent blackness—there came, spreading its beams and swaying, billowing, folding in and swelling out, the faint, pale-blue-golden radiance of the Northern Lights. Whenever they flared out everything—the lake, the shore, the stones, and the wet grass—shone, and the church stood out in firm silhouette; when it faded everything became diminished, and obscure, and vanished.

The earth was turning. Ageyev suddenly felt it with his legs and his heart as it turned and flew, together with its lakes, cities, people and their hopes—turned and flew, ringed with light, into frightening infinity. And here he stood upon this earth, this island, in the silent light of the night, and Vika was leaving him. Adam was being left by Eve—and not at some uncertain future time but now, at once. And it was like death, which you can laugh at from a distance but cannot even bear to think about when it is close beside you.

He couldn't bear it and walked quickly back to the landing-stage, feeling his boots getting soaked through in the wet grass, seeing nothing

[2] *"Good-bye"* in English in the text.

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in the darkness but knowing that now they were black and shiny.

When he came back to the pier the lantern was already shining on a post, the old woman stood yawning on the steps below, while from beyond a low hill in the north came a new beam, trembling like the Aurora but warmer in tone. The beam shifted, there came the quick noises of paddles, and suddenly, high and resonant, the ship's siren, echoing on and on from island to island.

"Did you see the Northern Lights? It was that, wasn't it?" Vika asked in a quick and low voice. She was excited and no longer sitting on her suitcase but standing by the railings.

"Yes, I saw," Ageyev cleared his throat.

The ship wheeled into sight round a bend and could now be heard more clearly. The small star of its searchlight shone brightly in the bow. Now the light reached the landing-stage and the lamp glistened on the planks. The engines stopped and the ship drifted on of its own momentum towards the pier. The old woman shielded her eyes with her hand from the brilliant light, peering at something on board. Turning his back on the searchlight Ageyev saw its beam tremble smokily on the beautiful old farm as if spotlighting an antique.

As the steamer pulled alongside the searchlight turned and flooded the pier with a dazzling milky brightness. Vika and Ageyev watched silently as the ship was moored. A sailor on deck flung the end of the cable to the old woman. The old woman unhurriedly slipped the loop over a bollard. The sailor bent down and wound the cable in. The cable tautened and creaked and the pier shuddered. The steamer softly bumped against it. The sailor let down the gangway and stood under the lamp, checking the ticket of some passenger who was getting off. At last he let him through and turned to Vika and Ageyev.

"Coming aboard?" he asked uncertainly.

"Well, off with you," said Ageyev, giving Vika's shoulder a careless pat. "All the best!"

Her lips trembled.

"Good-bye," she said, and climbed on deck, her shoes tapping on the gangway.

The boat was almost empty, the lower deck dimly lit and the cabin portholes dark. Either there was no one in the cabins or the passengers were asleep. Steam hissed between the ship's side and the pier and floated up in transparent puffs.

Vika went below without looking back and vanished in the ship's bowels. The siren shrieked hurriedly—one long and three short blasts, the old woman slipped the noose off the bollard, the gangway was pulled up, the ventilators clanged shut on deck—and the boat, a warm, familiar, breathing creature, the only thing alive in the cold night, was pulling out, gurgling with its paddles and whirling sharply right.

The old woman yawned again, muttered that the Northern Lights were early this year and this meant a hard winter, picked up her lantern and walked up the bank, throwing a patch of light in front of her, smearing yellow light over her boots and carrying on her left side a big unsteady shadow which, as she swung the lantern, leapt from the bank over the pier into the lake.

Ageyev stood still smoking a cigarette, and walked back to the warm hotel. The Northern Lights were still flashing but were now faint and all of the same colour—white.

[*Translated by* Manya Harari]

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Eight Poems

Translated by W. H. Auden, Stanley Kunitz, and Richard Wilbur

Andrei Voznesensky

Parabolic Ballad

Along a parabola life like a rocket flies,
Mainly in darkness, now and then on a rainbow.
Red-headed bohemian Gauguin the painter
Started out life as a prosperous stockbroker.
In order to get to the Louvre from Montmartre
He made a detour all through Java, Sumatra,
Tahiti, the Isles of Marquesas.
With levity
He took off in flight from the madness of money,
The cackle of women, the frowst of academies,
Overpowered the force of terrestrial gravity.
The high priests drank their porter and kept up their jabbering:
"Straight lines are shorter, less steep than parabolas.
It's more proper to copy the heavenly mansions."

He rose like a howling rocket, insulting them
With a gale that tore off the tails of their frock-coats.
So he didn't steal into the Louvre by the front-door
But on a parabola smashed through the ceiling.
In finding their truths lives vary in daring:
Worms come through holes and bold men on parabolas.

There once was a girl who lived in my neighbourhood.
We went to one school, took exams simultaneously.
But I took off with a bang,
I went whizzing
Through the prosperous double-faced stars of Tiflis.
Forgive me for this idiotic parabola.
Cold shoulders in a pitch-dark vestibule . . .
Rigid, erect as a radio antenna-rod
Sending its call-sign out through the freezing
Dark of the universe, how you rang out to me,
An undoubtable signal, an earthly stand-by
From whom I might get my flight-bearings to land by.
The parabola doesn't come to us easily.

Laughing at law with its warnings and paragraphs
Art, love and history race along recklessly
Over a parabolic trajectory.

He is leaving to-night for Siberia.
Perhaps
A straight line after all is the shorter one actually.

translated by W. H. Auden

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Bella Akhmadulina

Volcanoes

Extinct volcanoes are silent:
Ash chokes crater and vent.
There giants hide from the sun
After the evil they have done.

Realms ever denser and colder
Weigh on each brutal shoulder,
But the old wicked visions keep
Visiting them in their sleep.

They behold a city, sure
Here summer will endure,
Though columns carved from congealed
Lava frame garden and field.

It is long ago: in sunlit hours
Girls gather armfuls of flowers
And Bacchantes give a meaning sign
To men as they sip their wine.

A feast is in progress: louder
The diners grow, more heated and lewder . . .
O my Pompei in your cindery grave,
Child of a princess and a slave!

What future did you assume,
What were you thinking of and whom
When you leaned your elbow thus
Thoughtlessly on Vesuvius?

Were you carried away by his stories?
Did you gaze with astonished eyes?
Didn't you guess—were you *that* innocent?—
Passion can be violent?

And then, when that day ended,
Did he lay a knowing forehead
At your dead feet? Did he, didn't he,
Bellow: "Forgive me!"?

translated by W. H. Auden

Evgeni Vinokurov

Every railway station keeps a book for complaints
And, if you ask for it, they have to give it you:
It wouldn't be a bad idea, I think,
If eternity had a book like that,
Then people wouldn't have to keep silent about their sorrow.
Timidly, cautiously at first, they would all come, bringing
The griefs they endure, the wrongs they are made to suffer,
To universal attention and judgement.
How we should then be struck, I know,
By one entry of half a line
written
By that woman who, slumped against its railings,
Was crying in the park last night.

translated by W. H. Auden

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Andrei Voznesensky

Fire in the Architectural Institute

Fire in the Architectural Institute!
through all the rooms and over the blueprints
like an amnesty through the jails. . . .
Fire! Fire!

High on the sleepy façade
shamelessly, mischievously
like a red-assed baboon
a window skitters.

We'd already written our theses,
the time had come for us to defend them.
They're crackling away in a sealed cupboard:
all those bad reports on me!

The drafting paper is wounded,
it's a red fall of leaves;
my drawing boards are burning,
whole cities are burning.

Five summers and five winters shoot up in flames
like a jar of kerosene.
Karen, my pet,
Oi! we're on fire!

Farewell architecture:
it's down to a cinder
for all those cowsheds decorated with cupids
and those post-offices in rococo!

O youth, phoenix, ninny,
your dissertation is hot stuff,
flirting its little red skirt now,
flaunting its little red tongue.

Farewell life in the sticks!
Life is a series of burned-out sites.
Nobody escapes the bonfire:
if you live—you burn.

But tomorrow, out of these ashes,
more poisonous than a bee
your compass-point will dart
to sting you in the finger.

Everything's gone up in smoke,
and there's no end of people sighing.
It's the end?
It's only the beginning.
Let's go to the movies!

translated by Stanley Kunitz

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Andrei Voznesensky

Autumn

The flapping of ducks' wings.
And on the pathways in the parks
the shimmer of the last cobwebs
and of the last bicycle spokes.

You should listen to what they are hinting:
go knock at the door of the last house for leavetaking;
in that proper house a woman lives
who does not expect a husband for supper.

She will release the bolt for me
and nuzzle against my coat,
she will laugh as she offers her lips to me;
and suddenly, gone limp, she will understand everything—
the autumn call of the fields,
the scattering of seed in the wind, the breakup of families. . . .

Still young, trembling with cold,
she will think about how
even the apple tree bears fruit
and the old brown cow has a calf

and how life ferments in the hollows of oaks,
in pastures, in houses, in windswept woods,
ripening with the grain, treading with woodcocks,
and she will weep, sick with desire,

whispering, "What good are they to me:
my hands, my breasts? What sense does it make
to live as I do, lighting the stove,
repeating my daily round of work?"

And I shall embrace her—
I who can't make sense of it either—
while outside, in the first hoarfrost,
the fields turn aluminium.
Across them—black across them—black and gray
my footprints will march
to the railway station.

translated by Stanley Kunitz

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Andrei Voznesensky

The Skull Ballad

A Digression into the 17th Century

The peasants flock from miles around
To gape at the terrible Czar
And jeer and spit at his spying bitch,
That dirty foreigner.

The Czar is skinny as a nag
And black as anthracite;
His eyes slide over his coal-black face
Like a skidding motorbike.

Her head rolls from the blow of his axe
To the toe of his hunter's boot;
He dangles it high above the crowd
Like a red-topped turnip root.

He grips her cheeks in an iron vise,
He cracks the bridge of her nose;
The blood spurts from her golden throat
On her executioner's clothes.

He kisses her full upon the mouth,
While a groan sweeps through the crowd,
And suddenly silence stuns the square
As the death's-head speaks aloud:

"Beloved one O worshipful Czar
I will not judge thy guilt
But why do thy hands stick to my skin
and taste of my own heart's salt

let me confess my womanhood
my crime deserves the whip
I tremble where that crimson fleck
hangs on thy bristling lip

love is so small who cares for love
in times like these men build
and set a world on fire you kiss
me State in blood in blood

what if you reek of borscht and peas
such passion has a flavour
Progress you drive me mad for you
I want you to rule forever"

Stockstill the greatest of the Czars
Stood black as blackest bread;
A witness from abroad jerked back
Like a spike rammed to its head.

translated by Stanley Kunitz

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Andrei Voznesensky

Foggy Street

The air is grey-white as a pigeon-feather.
Police bob up like corks on a fishing-net.
Foggy weather.
What century is it? What era? I forget.

As in a nightmare, everything is crumbling;
people have come unsoldered; nothing's intact . . .
I plod on, stumbling—
Or flounder in cotton wool, to be more exact.

Noses. Parking lights. Badges flash and blur.
All's vague, as at a magic-lantern show.
Your hat-check, Sir?
Mustn't walk off with the wrong head, you know.

It's as if a woman who's scarcely left your lips
Should blur in the mind, yet trouble it with recall—
Bereft now, widowed by your love's eclipse—
Still yours, yet suddenly not yours at all . . .

Can that be Venus? No—an ice-cream vendor!
I bump into curbstones, bump into passersby . . .
Are they friends, I wonder?
Home-bred Iagos, how covert you are, how sly!

Why, it's you, my darling, shivering there alone!
Your overcoat's too big for you, my dear.
But why have you grown
That moustache? And hoar frost in your hairy ear!

I trip. I stagger. I persist.
Murk, murk . . . there's nothing visible anywhere.
Whose is the cheek you brush now in the mist?
Ahoy there!
One's voice won't carry in this heavy air . . .

When the fog lifts, how brilliant it is, how rare!

translated by Richard Wilbur

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Andrei Voznesensky

Anti-worlds

The clerk Bukashkin is our neighbour.
His face is grey as blotting-paper.

But like balloons of blue or red,
Bright Anti-Worlds
float over his head!
On them reposes, prestidigitous,
Ruling the cosmos, a demon-magician,
Anti-Bukashkin the academician,
Lapped in the arms of Lollobrigidas.

But Anti-Bukashkin's dreams are the colour
Of blotting-paper, and couldn't be duller.

Long live Anti-Worlds! They rebut
With dreams the rat-race and the rut.
For some to be clever, some must be boring.
No deserts? No oases, then.
There are no women—
just anti-men.
In the forests, anti-machines are roaring.
There's the dirt of the earth, as well as the salt.
If the earth broke down, the sun would halt.

Ah, my critics; how I love them.
Upon the neck of the keenest of them,
Fragrant and bald as fresh-baked bread,
There shines a perfect anti-head . . .

. . . I sleep with windows open wide;
Somewhere a falling star invites,
And skyscrapers
like stalactites
Hang from the planet's underside.
There, upside down,
below me far,
Stuck like a fork into the earth,
Or perching like a carefree moth,
My little Anti-World,
there you are!

In the middle of the night, why is it
That Anti-Worlds are moved to visit?

Why do they sit together, gawking
At the television, and never talking?

Neither can understand a word.
How can they bear it? It's too absurd.

Neither displays the least *bon ton.*
Oh, how they'll blush for it, later on!

Their ears are burning like a pair
Of crimson butterflies, hovering there . . .

. . . A distinguished lecturer lately told me,
"Anti-Worlds are a total loss."
Still, my apartment-cell won't hold me.
I thrash in my sleep, I turn and toss.

And, radio-like, my cat lies curled
With his green eye tuned in to the world.

translated by Richard Wilbur

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Vasili Aksyonov

Half-way to the Moon

"Some coffee?"

"Yes."

"Turkish?"

"Eh?"

"Turkish coffee," the waitress crowed and flounced away between the tables.

"She's nothing to write home about," Kirpichenko consoled himself as he watched her go.

"Fuss about nothing!" he thought, wincing from his headache. "Fifty minutes left. Any moment they'll be calling the flight and I'll get the hell out of this place. Some town, I must say. What a dump. It's no Moscow. There may be those who like it, but they can have it as far as I'm concerned. To hell with it! Maybe it'll look different next time."

He'd been doing some really hard drinking—not what you might call a real binge, but they'd got pretty tight. For three solid days. All on account of that swine Banin and his precious sister. They'd really messed him up, and all on his own hard-earned roubles!

Kirpichenko had run across Banin three days earlier at the airfield in Yuzhny. He hadn't even known they'd both got leave at the same time. He hadn't really much time for him. At the lumber camp there'd always been a lot of fuss about him, with people shouting all the time: "Banin, Banin! Take your cue from Banin!"—but Kirpichenko never took much notice of him. He knew the name, of course, and he knew who the fellow was—Banin, the electrician—but by and large he didn't stand out in a crowd despite all the fuss kicked up about him on the big holidays. But a fat lot of use Banin was!

There were fellows at the lumber camp who did just as good a job as Banin—they could run circles around him—but the bosses are always the same: when they pick out one man and start a song-and-dance about him, there's no reason for envying such a fellow, he's fit only for pity. There was a fellow called Sinitsyn at Bayukly—drove a tractor like Kirpichenko. The journalists took to him and gave him the full treatment. At first he kept all the newspaper cuttings, but then he couldn't stand it any longer and cleared out to Okha. But Banin didn't mind and put up with it all. Neat little fellow he was, and always on his toes—seemed just an ordinary sort who kept very much to himself. Last year they brought two hundred girls from the mainland to the cannery—seasonal workers to gut the fish. The boys went off to see them and were climbing on the truck, yelling and shouting.... Then they saw Banin sitting in a corner inside as quiet as a mouse, there'd been neither sight nor sound from him.

"Oh, it's Banin, for God's sake," they said.

At Yuzhny airfield Banin pounced on Kirpichenko as if he were his best friend. He was choking with delight, he shouted that he was terribly pleased, that he had this sister in Khabarovsk, and that she had some girl friends who were really quite something. He began to embroider the whole thing in detail till Kirpichenko started to feel dizzy. After the batch of girls had left the cannery, Valeri Kirpichenko had spent the whole winter without seeing more than two women—or rather two old hags: the one who kept the time-sheets and the cook.

In the plane Banin kept shouting to the crew:

"Hey there, you pilots! Shovel on a bit more coal!"

You could hardly recognise the fellow, what with all those wisecracks....

The house where this sister of Banin's lived was almost buried in a snow-drift. The hump-backed street had obviously been cleared by special machines, but the piles of snow had not been taken away, and they almost hid the tiny cottages from view. It was as if the

Vasili Aksyonov *is 30 and published his first stories in 1959. He holds a medical degree and has practised as a doctor. When he was asked recently by the official* Soviet Literature (*December, 1962*) *his views about "a writer's responsibilities under Communism" he replied: "The writer must avoid like the plague any moralising or didacticism. ... The unequivocal adherence to the truth of life—that is the greatest law. . . ." He mentioned his admiration for Hemingway, Faulkner, Böll, and Salinger, and added that his own next novel would be "about scientists": "the spiritual life of the new technical intelligentsia—isn't that interesting?..."*

This story was translated by Ronald Hingley.

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cottages were in a trench. In the crackling, frosty air there were blue columns of smoke above the chimneys, and aerials and poles with boxes for the starlings stuck out at all angles. It was just a country lane to look at. It was even difficult to believe that there was a trolley-bus route along the highway on the hill.

Kirpichenko had been a bit dazed back in the airport when he saw a long row of cars with green lights in front of a restaurant with a plate-glass wall; you could make out the prim dance-band through the frost patterns. In the shops on the main street he'd really let himself go. He pulled out green fifty-rouble notes, laughed loudly, shoved bottles into his pockets and swept up a whole armful of tinned goods. Banin was tickled pink and laughed even more than Kirpichenko, and just kept picking up cheeses and tinned goods, then he had a talk with one of the managers and took a lot of salami. Banin and Kirpichenko drove to the cottage in a taxi loaded with all kinds of food and bottles of Chechen-Ingush cognac. You might say they didn't come to that sister of his empty-handed.

Kirpichenko went into the room, his shaggy fur hat touching the ceiling, put the stuff down on the white-quilted bed, straightened up, and caught sight of his red, thin, and cross-looking face in a mirror.

Larisa, Banin's sister, who looked like a plump little nurse, was already unbuttoning his overcoat and saying:

"Any friends of my brother are friends of mine."

Then she put on a coat and boots, and went outside.

Banin got busy with a corkscrew and knife while Kirpichenko looked around. The room was decently furnished with a sideboard and mirror, a chest-of-drawers and a radiogram. A picture of Voroshilov, taken before the war (without epaulettes and with his marshal's stars on the lapels), was hanging above the chest. Next to it was a framed certificate: *"To a First Class Marksman of the Guard for proficiency in military and political training. From the Administration of the North-Eastern Corrective Labour Camps."*

"Dad's certificate," Banin said.

"What, you mean he was a concentration-camp guard?"

"He was, but now he's had it," sighed Banin. "Dead."

But he soon cheered up and started to play some records. They were nothing very new: *Rio Rita*, *The Black Sea Gull*, and some kind of French tune with three men singing in harmony as splendidly as if they'd been round the whole wide world and seen things you'd never see yourself.

Larisa came back with a girl-friend called Toma. She started setting the table and kept running to and from the kitchen, bringing gherkins and mushrooms, while Toma sat in a corner and just sat there stock-still with her hands on her knees. Kirpichenko didn't know how things would turn out with her and tried not to look at her, but every time he did look he felt dizzy.

"We're caught in winter's icy grip,
So now's the time to have a nip,"

Banin said cheerfully, but he was nervous. "Supper is served, ladies and gentlemen."

Kirpichenko was smoking long cigarettes called "Forty Years of the Soviet Ukraine" and blowing smoke-rings. Larisa was giggling and threading them on her little finger. It was stuffy in the low room. Kirpichenko's feet had got damp in his felt boots and it was probably from them that the steam came. Banin danced with Toma, who didn't say a word all evening. He was whispering something to her and she gave a crooked smile without opening her mouth. She was a well-built girl with pink underwear showing through her nylon blouse. Before Kirpichenko's eyes everything swam in dark orange circles—the walls, Voroshilov's picture, the little porcelain elephants on the chest-of-drawers. The smoke rings he had blown were swirling about, and Larisa was making some sort of signs with her fingers.

Banin and Toma went into another room. The spring lock clicked quietly behind them.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Larisa. "But why didn't you dance, Valeri? You should have."

The record ended and there was silence. Larisa looked at him, screwing up her slanting brown eyes. There were muffled squeals from the next room.

"You've the bread and butter, Valeri," Larisa sniggered. "But where's the jam?" And Kirpichenko suddenly saw that she was getting on for thirty and that she had been around.

She came over to him and whispered: "Let's dance."

"But I'm wearing felt boots," he said.

"Doesn't matter, come on."

He got up. She put on a record, and the three

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French boys struck up their chorus again in the room, which smelled of tomatoes and Chechen-Ingush cognac. They sang about how they had been round the whole wide world and seen things you would never see.

"Not that one," Kirpichenko said hoarsely.

"Why not?" shouted Larisa. "It's a real good record! Right in the groove!"

She started whirling round the room, with her skirt swishing round her legs. Kirpichenko took the record off and put on *Rio Rita*. Then he strode over to Larisa and seized her by the shoulders.

THAT'S WHAT it's always like when fingers stroke your neck in the dark, and it seems as if they're the fingers of the moon, whatever cheap tart might be lying next to you... all the same, afterwards, when these fingers touch your neck... and you ought to send her packing... you think... but what don't you think with the moon high up and looking like a broken egg-yolk through the frosted window? But it never does happen, and don't kid yourself that it ever will. You're already twenty-nine and you've had your ups and downs in this lovely life, but when there are fingers on your neck in the dark, you think it's...

"When were you born?" the woman asked.

"In thirty-two."

"You're a driver, are you?"

"Yes."

"Earn much?"

Valeri lit a match and saw her round face with its slanting brown eyes.

"Why do you want to know?"

NEXT MORNING Banin was shuffling about the room in warm Chinese underwear. He was squeezing gherkin juice into a glass and throwing the wrinkled skins into a dish. Toma sat in a corner, as neat and quiet as on the night before. After breakfast she and Larisa went off to work.

"Proper good time we had, eh, Valeri?" said Banin with a fawning laugh. "O.K. then, let's go to the cinema."

They saw three films in a row and then called at the store, where Kirpichenko really let rip again. He kept pulling out red bank-notes and piling cheeses and provisions into Banin's arms.

It had gone on like this for three days and nights, but this morning, after the girls had left, Banin had suddenly said:

"So you're one of the family now, Valeri?"

Kirpichenko choked on the gherkin juice he was drinking for his hangover.

"Wha-at!"

"What do you mean, 'what'?" Banin yelled. "Do you sleep with that sister of mine or don't you? Come on, tell me when we're going to celebrate the wedding, or else I'll report you—for immoral behaviour—see what I mean?"

From right across the table Kirpichenko hit him on the side of the face. Banin went crashing into a corner, jumped up straight away and picked up a chair.

"You bastard!" Kirpichenko snarled and went towards him. "Think I'm going to marry the first slut that comes along...."

"You concentration-camp rat!" screamed Banin. "Jail bird!" And he threw the chair at him.

And now Kirpichenko really showed him what was what. Banin snatched up his sheepskin coat and rushed outside. Kirpichenko's teeth were chattering, he was so furious and upset. He dragged out his suitcase, threw his belongings into it, put on his raincoat and his fur overcoat on top of that, pulled out of his pocket a photograph of himself (wearing a tie and his very best cowboy-style shirt), quickly wrote on it *"To Larisa, in fond memory,"* put it on the pillow in Larisa's room—and left the house. In the yard Banin, spluttering and cursing, was untying a savage dog. Kirpichenko kicked the dog away and went out through the gate....

"WELL, how do you like the coffee?" the waitress asked.

"Not bad, it's working," sighed Kirpichenko, and patted her hand.

"Take it easy," smiled the waitress.

Then their flight was called and it was time for the passengers to take their seats.

Light-heartedly Kirpichenko marched towards the airfield with long, powerful strides. "Onward, onward, ever onward!" he thought. What's the point of getting leave once in a month of Sundays if you spend it stuck in a shack on a diet of mushrooms and cheese? There are fellows who spend their whole holiday stuck in that kind of cottage, but he wasn't that stupid. He'd go to Moscow, buy three suits and a pair of Czech shoes in the State Universal Stores, then on, on to the Black Sea—where he'd eat Crimean pastries and lounge around in beach pyjamas.

At that moment he seemed to see himself

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through someone else's eyes—big and strong, in an overcoat with a fur coat on top, in a muskrat hat and fur boots, striding along like nobody's business. A woman he'd had an affair with a couple of years ago said he had a face like a Red Indian Chief. She was the leader of a geological expedition, of all things. She was a good girl, this Anna Petrovna, a university lecturer or something of the sort. She wrote him letters and he wrote back: "Greetings, dear Anna Petrovna! The writer of these lines is your old friend Valeri Kirpichenko..."—all kinds of fancy things like that.

A big crowd of passengers had already gathered by the turnstiles. Not far away Larisa was hopping around. Her face was white with a touch of blue, her lips were bright red, and the brooch on her collar, shaped like a running stag, looked terribly stupid.

"What did you come for?" asked Kirpichenko.

"T-to see you off," Larisa could hardly get the words out.

"Oh, cut it out," he said. "You and your darling brother messed me up for three days.... That's fine, but don't try on any of that love stuff."

Larisa burst into tears and Valeri got scared.

"Now, now, don't take on...."

"All right," she snivelled. "All right, so that's the way it was.... O.K.... I know what you think of me... and you're right.... But can't I love you if I want to?"

"Cut it out."

"No, I won't, I won't!" Larisa almost shouted. "Valeri, you...." She came up close to him. "You're not like the others...."

"I'm just the same as everyone else, except that perhaps...." And Kirpichenko slowly stretched his lips in a smile.

Larisa turned away and began crying even more. Her pitiful little body was shaking all over.

"Now, now, don't take on..." Kirpichenko said. He was very upset and he stroked her shoulder.

Then the crowd began moving on to the runway. Kirpichenko left without looking back. He was thinking that he felt sorry for Larisa and that he'd come to feel at home with her, though actually that was something which happened to him with any girl on account of his idiotic character. Afterwards he always forgot and everything went back to normal. Back to normal, and that was that.

He walked among the crowd of passengers, gazing at the huge aeroplane gleaming in the sunlight, and very soon he forgot everything—the horror of his three days' stay here and those fingers on his neck. He wasn't for sale at that price. That's the way it always had been. He couldn't be bought and he couldn't be broken. He hadn't only had to do with tarts, he'd had some really fine women too. That university lecturer, for instance, was a real honey. They'd all fallen for him, and Valeri knew that this was brought about not by his cruelty, but by something else—perhaps because he didn't talk much, perhaps because each woman wanted to be something special to him, or because they could obviously sense that he was like a blind man groping his way in the dark. But he always said to himself: "You won't catch me with these little tricks. You won't break me down. The thing's happened and it's over. And we're back to normal. Back to normal again."

THE AEROPLANE was terrifyingly huge. It was as huge and heavy as a warship. Kirpichenko had never flown in such a plane before, and this one simply took his breath away. The thing he really liked was machinery. He climbed up a high gangway. An air-hostess in a dark blue uniform and cap looked at his ticket and told him where his seat was. The seat was up front, but there was some character already sitting in it, a fellow with spectacles and a cloth cap.

"Come on, beat it," said Kirpichenko quickly, showing his ticket to the man in spectacles.

"Couldn't you take my seat?" the man asked. "I get sick at the back."

"Clear out, I tell you," Kirpichenko barked at him.

"You might be more polite," said the man in spectacles, looking hurt. For some reason he didn't get up.

Kirpichenko yanked the man's hat off and threw it right back towards where he should have been sitting. What he meant was—and he couldn't have made it clearer—"Next time, take the seat marked on your ticket."

"Hey, why are you making trouble?" the air-hostess asked.

"Take it easy," Kirpichenko said.

Completely nonplussed, the man in spectacles went to find his hat, and Kirpichenko sat down in his proper seat.

He took off his overcoat and put it at his feet, to stake out his claim, so to speak.

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The passengers were coming into the plane one by one, there seemed to be no end of them. Inside light music was playing. Sunlight was pouring in through the door. The air-hostesses were bustling up and down the aisle, all of them wore the same kind of blue uniform, and they had long legs and high-heeled shoes. Kirpichenko read the newspaper. Stuff about disarmament and Berlin, about preparations for the football championship in Chile, and the way to preserve the snow-cover for winter crops.

Some peasant woman with a shawl round her took the seat by the window, and a rosy-cheeked sailor took the place next to Kirpichenko. He kept making jokes:

"Made your will, lady . . . ?" And he shouted at the stewardess. "Miss, who do we hand our wills to?"

Funny how Kirpichenko was always running into these jokers!

At last the door was slammed and a red notice came on: *"No smoking. Fasten your seat-belts,"* together with something in English which might have been the same thing or something else. It could have been the opposite: *"Please smoke. You need not fasten your seat-belts."* Kirpichenko didn't know English.

A woman's voice spoke through the loudspeaker:

"May I have your attention, please! Your Captain welcomes passengers aboard the Soviet airliner TU 114. Our giant aircraft is bound from Khabarovsk to Moscow. We will be cruising at an altitude of thirty thousand feet at a speed of four hundred and forty miles an hour. Our flying time will be eight hours, thirty minutes. Thank you for your attention." Then she said some gibberish in English.

"That's the stuff," Kirpichenko said with satisfaction, and winked at the sailor. "Everything ship-shape."

"What d'you expect?" said the sailor, just as if the aircraft was his own property and as if he'd laid on the whole thing—the announcements in two languages and all the other stuff.

The plane taxied out for the take-off. The peasant woman was tense in her seat. The airport buildings floated past the window.

"May I have your coat?" the air-hostess asked.

It was the same girl who had ticked him off. He looked at her and went all faint. She was smiling. Her smiling face was bending over him, and her hair—it was dark, no, you couldn't say it was black—it was dark and must be soft. It was neatly done up and looked like fur, fleece, or nylon—like all the treasures in the world. Her fingers touched the sheepskin of his coat, and he'd never seen fingers like that before. Well, he had seen such things in the magazines, but you never got all this together, with such a smile and the voice of the greatest woman in the world. No, such things didn't happen.

"See how she took my coat?" Kirpichenko said to the sailor with a silly smile on his face. The sailor winked back and said proudly:

"They know their stuff, eh?"

She came back and picked up the peasant woman's short fur coat, the sailor's leather jacket and Kirpichenko's other coat. She pressed the whole lot to that wonderful body of hers and said:

"Fasten your seat-belts, comrades."

THE ENGINES ROARED. The peasant woman almost had a fit and crossed herself on the sly. The sailor mimicked her and looked out of the corner of his eye to see if Kirpichenko was laughing. But he was craning his neck and watching that girl. Then she came back with a tray and gave everyone sweets, or maybe they weren't sweets, but heart pills—or nuggets of gold, for all he knew. Then, when they were air-borne, she brought round soft drinks and mineral water, the kind of water which flows only in the highest and purest waterfalls. Then she vanished.

"Play cards?" asked the sailor. "We might get up a game."

The red sign went out and Kirpichenko knew it was all right to smoke. He got up and went right up front—into a cubby-hole behind a curtain. Clouds of steam were pouring out of it already.

"Here is some information about our flight," said a voice on the loudspeaker. "Altitude: thirty thousand feet. Speed: four hundred and seventy miles an hour. Air temperature outside: minus fifty-eight degrees Centigrade. Thank you for your attention."

Far below a rocky wasteland floated past. It even made Kirpichenko shudder to think that in the icy air way above the cruel, bare earth, this metal cigar was sailing along, full of human warmth, politeness, cigarette smoke, muffled talk and laughter, jokes (the kind you wouldn't tell your sister), mineral water, drops from a waterfall in some fertile region—while he was sitting here and smoking, and somewhere in the tail or maybe in the middle of the plane, there was a woman of the kind that doesn't really

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exist, the kind that's as far away from you as the moon.

HE STARTED THINKING about his life and remembering things. He'd never done this before, except when he was spinning some yarn or other to the boys. But now he thought all of a sudden: "My fourth trip right across the country, and the first at my own expense. Terrific!"

All his previous trips had been paid for by the Government. In 1939, when Valeri was still a kid, all the members of their *kolkhoz* in Stavropol suddenly expressed their wish to be transferred to the Far Eastern Coastal Region. The journey had taken a long time. He remembered a little of it—sour milk and sour cabbage soup, with his mother washing clothes in a corner of the railway truck, and hanging them out of the window to dry; they flapped like flags out there and then froze stiff and banged against the side of the train, while he sang: *"Pilots sit in the sky, as their aeroplanes fly, and look down on the earth from on high...."* His mother had died during the war, and his father was killed in action in the Kuriles in 1945. Valeri got seven years of schooling in an orphanage and was then trained as an apprentice in a factory school. After that he worked in a mine, and dug coal for the good old motherland. In 1950 he was called up and they sent him right across the country again —to the Baltic Coast this time. They trained him as a driver in the Army, and when he was demobbed he went to Novorossiisk with a pal. A year after that he was arrested. Some bastard had been pinching spare parts from the garage where he worked, but the cops didn't waste their time on the business and they picked on him as the "materially responsible person." He got three years, and they sent him to Sakhalin. He spent a year-and-a-half in a camp and was then let out for good conduct. After that he was cleared and given a full pardon. Ever since then he had worked in the lumber camp. He liked the work and the money was good. All he had to do was tow trailers up to the top of a mountain and then bring them down the other side with all the brakes on, drink hard liquor, go to the films, and, in summer, to dances with the girls at the cannery. He lived in a hostel. He'd lived all his life in hostels, barracks, and dormitories. Nothing but bunks, single-decker and double-decker, plank beds, benches.... He had no friends, but plenty of "pals." People were a bit scared of him and thought twice before they fooled around with him. He'd give you a black eye as soon as look at you. And he was very good at his job. He loved machines, and remembered the things he'd driven as other people remember their friends. There was "Ivan Willis" (his jeep in the Army), then a haulage truck, then a one-and-a-half-tonner, a Tatra, and the Diesel he had now.... In the towns out there—like Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Poronaisk, or Korsakov—he sometimes stopped on a corner and looked up at the windows of the new blocks of flats, at all the posh standard lamps and window-curtains, and it worried him sometimes. He never thought of his age, and had only recently realised that he'd be thirty in a few months' time. In Moscow he would buy himself three suits and a green hat, and go down South like one of those big-shots with brief-cases. He had travellers' cheques sewn into his underpants—all the cash in the world. He'd have lots of fun down there. It would really be something.

HE GOT UP and went to look for that girl. Where had she gone to? The passengers were all dying for a drink, and there she was standing and jabbering in English to some capitalist.

She was chatting with her eyes all screwed up and smiling, and it looked as if she liked gossipping in English. The capitalist was standing right by her. He was tall and scraggy and his hair was close-cropped and grey, though he was quite young. His jacket was undone and there was a thin gold chain running from his belt to a pocket. He had a booming voice, and the words rattled in his mouth as if they were banging into his teeth. Kirpichenko knew all about this kind of small talk:

HE: Let's go to San Francisco and drink whisky, my dear.

SHE: You are going a little too far, sir.

HE: In Singapore, with all those banana and lemon trees.... Understand?

SHE: Do you really mean it? With the banana trees bending in the breeze?

HE: Then we go up to the hundred-and-second storey, and there's boogie-woogie and jazz.

Kirpichenko went up and jogged the capitalist with his shoulder. The capitalist was taken aback and said: "I am sorry."* By which he meant, of course: "Watch out, young fellow, or you'll get it."

"Take it easy," said Kirpichenko. "Peace and friendship, and all that."

* In English in the text.

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(He knew his politics.)

The capitalist said something to her over Kirpichenko's head. It sounded like: "Take your choice. It's either him or me: Vladivostok or San Francisco."

And she said with a smile: "I know this comrade, and you leave me alone. I am a Soviet woman."

"What do you want, comrade?" she asked Kirpichenko.

"My throat's sort of dry," he said. "Got anything I can drink?"

"Come this way," she said, and went ahead, as frisky as a lamb. Like something in the films, she was, like a dream. God, how he'd longed for her while he'd been smoking up front there.

She walked ahead like something out of this world, and took him to a kind of buffet, or it might have been her own home, where there was no one else, and where the tall sun shone with quiet fury through a porthole, or perhaps through a window on the eighth floor of a new block of flats. She picked up a bottle and poured the bubbling liquid into a tumbler. She picked up the glass and it blazed with light in the sun. And he looked at the girl, and wanted to have a kid by her, but he couldn't even imagine doing to her what people do when they want to have children; it was the first time this had happened, and he was suddenly warmed by an unexpected glow of happiness.

"What's your name?" he asked, with the same feeling he always had coming down the mountainside on his tractor—a mixture of fear and a feeling that the worst was over.

"Tanya," she answered.

"And I'm Kirpichenko... Valeri," he said, and held out his hand.

She gave him her fingers, and smiled.

"You're not the shy sort," she said.

"A bit," he said, feeling crushed.

For a few seconds they looked at each other without speaking. She felt like bursting out laughing. She was trying not to, and so was he, but he couldn't keep it up and smiled as he had surely never done in his life before.

Then someone called her, and she ran down the steps to the lower deck of the plane.

KIRPICHENKO TURNED, and saw his smiling face in a mirror. "What a face," he thought. "Pretty grim—like a real thug. But she doesn't seem to worry. I'm sure she's not scared a bit."

He started back down the aisle and saw the fellow with the specs who'd tried to take his seat. He was lying back with his eyes closed. He had a handsome face, just as if it was cut out of marble.

"Listen, fellow," said Kirpichenko, prodding his shoulder. "Take my place if you like."

He opened his eyes and smiled faintly. "Thanks, I'm all right where I am...."

Perhaps it wasn't the man's first flight in this kind of plane, and he'd taken the seat up front so he could watch the door opening into the cabin and see the members of the crew scratching themselves, smoking, laughing, reading newspapers, and taking an occasional look at the instruments.

Tanya began serving dinner. She gave Valery his tray and looked at him as if he were an old friend.

"Where d'you live, Tanya?" he asked.

"In Moscow," she answered, and went off.

Kirpichenko ate, and kept thinking that his steak was thicker than other people's, that his apple was larger, and that she had given him more bread. Then she brought tea.

"So you come from Moscow?" he asked again.

"Yes," she said brightly, and went off.

"You're wasting your time, pal," the sailor said with a grin. "I bet she's got some smart boy-friend waiting for her in Moscow."

"Don't worry," said Kirpichenko with a feeling of his own well-being and happiness.

But flights like this don't last for ever, and aeroplanes have a habit of coming down from their lofty heights. A stewardess's tour of duty comes to an end, too, and she finishes all the little chores that go with it. She hands back your coat with her frail little hands and her eyes begin to wander. And everything slowly runs down, like clockwork in a toy, and goes as flat and stale as the girl in the magazine with that ad: "AEROFLOT, YOUR AIR TRAVEL AGENT"—a real marvel with painted nails, high-heeled shoes, and a smart hair-do all thrown in.

But no, nothing was running down and nothing was going flat, though they were already taxi-ing along the ground....

Now there was a great hustle and bustle, but the girl in the blue cap wasn't there any more.

"Don't get in the way, comrade...."

"Get a move on there...."

"Here she is, boys, it's Moscow...."

"Moscow, here we come!..."

"Oh, come on, for Christ's sake...."

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Still not grasping what was happening to him, Kirpichenko left the plane with the sailor, went down the steps and got into a bus. The bus drove over to the airport building and the "Soviet Liner TU-114, Giant of the Air," that flying fortress of his dreams, quickly vanished from his sight.

THE TAXI SPED ALONG a broad highway with two traffic lanes. Lorries, vans, and tip-up trucks hugged the side of the road, while passenger vehicles raced along at top speed and overtook them so quickly they might have been standing still. Then Kirpichenko and the sailor caught sight of the pinkish, thousand-eyed apartment blocks of the south-western suburb. The sailor fidgeted in his seat and put his hand on Valeri's shoulder.

"The big city! What do you think?"

"Listen, does that plane fly back now?" Kirpichenko asked.

"Of course. They'll be off to-morrow."

"With the same crew?"

The sailor gave a mocking whistle.

"Come off it! She's just one of these posh modern girls. There's millions like that in Moscow. No need to go off your rocker."

"I was only just wondering," mumbled Kirpichenko.

"Where to, boys?" asked the driver.

"Take us to the State Stores in Red Square," Kirpichenko blurted out and at once forgot all about the plane.

At the stores he bought three suits straight off—blue, grey, and brown. He kept the brown suit on, and taking his old one, which had been made four years previously by a tailor in Sakhalin, rolled it up in a bundle and left it in a lavatory. The sailor got himself some gabardine for a mackintosh and said he would have it made in Odessa. They drank a bottle of champagne apiece in a food shop and did a tour of the Kremlin. Then they went and dined in the National Hotel and ate something with a fancy name—Julienne or something—and drank Georgian wine. There were a lot of girls here who looked like Tanya, maybe Tanya had been here even. She might have been sitting at their table now and pouring him mineral water, and going off to the kitchen all the time to see how they were getting on with his steak. At any rate, the capitalist from the plane was here. Kirpichenko waved to him, and he stood up and bowed. Then they went out in the street and drank another bottle of champagne each. In Gorky Street, Tanya was all over the place. She skipped in and out of trolley-buses, and ran into shops. She strolled with the teddy boys on the other side of the street, or else smiled from shop windows. Gripping each other firmly by the arm, Kirpichenko and the sailor walked up Gorky Street and smiled. The sailor began humming:

"Madagascar, land of my birth...."

IT WAS ALREADY DUSK, but the lights were not yet on. At the end of the street, on the edge of the world, there was a glow of springtime. Yes, here was the land of dreams come true. They wondered why the girls shied away from them.

Later on they found there were queues for every place that was open, and they couldn't get in anywhere. They began to think about where to spend the night, so they hailed a cab and went to Vnukovo Airport. They took a room with two bunks in the airport hotel: the moment he set eyes on the white sheets, Kirpichenko realised how tired he was. He tore off his new suit and flopped down on the bed.

An hour later he was woken up by the sailor who was rushing round the room, scraping his cheeks with a "Sputnik" shaver and chortling:

"Get up, Val! I've just got hold of some girls, oh boy!... Get up, and let's go! They live right here in the hotel. This is the real thing, believe me, I've got a feel for these things. ... Come on, out of bed! *Ma-da-gascar....*"

"Stop clucking around like a hen on a new-laid egg!" said Kirpichenko, taking a cigarette from the bedside-table and lighting it.

"Are you coming or aren't you?" asked the sailor from the doorway.

"Put the lights out," Kirpichenko said.

The lights went out, and straightaway the moonlit square of the window was outlined against the wall, criss-crossed by the lattice and the swaying shadows of bare branches. It was quiet, apart from a gramophone playing somewhere far away: on the other side of the wall someone asked "who's got the six?" and banged on the table with a domino. Then a plane roared past as it came in to land. Kirpichenko smoked and imagined her lying beside him, both of them lying together afterwards, with her fingers stroking his neck. It all seemed to be real and not just make-believe, because everything he hadn't understood in his childhood and his youth—the Siberian hillocks standing out in the pink light of dawn, and

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melting snow, and tiredness after work, and Saturday and Sunday morning—all these things were Tanya.

"What a business," he thought, and once again that feeling of well-being and happiness came over him. He was glad that this had happened to him. He was scared of only one thing—that a hundred years would pass and he would forget her face and voice.

The sailor came into the room quietly. He undressed and lay down, took a cigarette from the bedside-table, lit up and sang sadly:

"Madagascar, land of my birth, Spring comes like everywhere on earth.... Oh, damn," he went on angrily. "What a life! Here to-day and gone to-morrow...."

"How long have you been at sea?" asked Kirpichenko.

"Since 'fifty-seven," the sailor answered, and started singing again:

Madagascar, land of my birth,
Spring comes like everywhere on earth,
We are people, like everyone,
We can love, just like you—
Our skin is black, but our blood is red and true....

"Write down the words for me," Kirpichenko asked him.

They turned on the light and the sailor gave him the words of this wonderful song. He liked that kind of song very much.

NEXT DAY they took their tickets to be punched, so that Kirpichenko could go on to Sochi and the sailor to Odessa. They had breakfast. Kirpichenko bought a book by Chekhov, and a magazine at a news-stand.

"Tell you what," the sailor said. "My girl has a nice little friend. How about taking a trip into town with them?"

Kirpichenko sat down in a chair and opened his book.

"No, no," he said. "You two go off, and I'll sit around here for a bit and read this stuff."

The sailor semaphored a naval signal: *Message received. Good luck. Am setting course.*

Kirpichenko loafed around the airport all day, but didn't see Tanya. In the evening he saw the sailor off on the flight to Odessa—and they drank a bottle of champagne each. Then he walked the sailor's girl-friend to the hostel, went back to the airport ticket office and bought a ticket for the giant TU-114, flight number 901, Moscow to Khabarovsk.

Inside the plane everthing was just the same—the signs in two languages and all the rest, but there was no Tanya. It was a different crew. There were some girls like Tanya, every bit as young and pretty, but none of them was in her class. After Tanya this lot came nowhere.

Next morning Kirpichenko was back in Khabarovsk, and an hour later he left for Moscow again in a different plane. But Tanya wasn't on this one either.

So he flew to and fro between Moscow and Khabarovsk, at a height of thirty thousand feet and at a speed of four hundred and seventy miles an hour. The air temperature outside varied from minus fifty to minus sixty degrees Centigrade. All the instruments functioned normally.

By now he knew almost all the stewardesses and quite a few of the pilots on this line by sight; he was afraid they might remember him too.

He thought he might be taken for a spy....

He kept changing his suits. He'd do one trip in the blue one, another in the brown, and a third in the grey.

He slit open his underpants, took out his travellers' cheques and put them in the pocket of his coat. They were going fast.

And still there was no sign of Tanya.

There was a fierce sun high up, rising and setting above a snowy wilderness of cloud. There was a moon, which seemed not far away, and in fact it wasn't very far off.

For a while he lost all track of time and space, and he stopped re-setting his watch. Khabarovsk seemed like a Moscow suburb, and Moscow seemed like a new district of Khabarovsk.

He read a great deal. He'd never read so much in his life.

He'd never thought so much in his life.

He'd never cried in his life.

He'd never had such a wonderful holiday in his life.

Spring was beginning in Moscow. Drops from those same high and pure waterfalls dripped down his neck. He bought a grey scarf with a large check pattern.

Just in case they might meet, he had got a present ready for Tanya—a box of perfume called *"The First of May"* and a length of cloth for a dress.

I RAN ACROSS him in the Khabarovsk airport building. He was sitting in an armchair with his legs crossed, reading Stanyuko-

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vich. A string-bag full of oranges was hanging on the arm of the chair. The cover of the book showed a clipper scudding along in a storm with billowing sails.

"You a sailor by any chance?" he asked, after a look at my leather jacket.

"No."

I stared at his strange, awesome face. He read a bit more and then asked another question:

"Are you sorry you're not a sailor?"

"Of course I am," I said.

"So am I," he said with a laugh. "I've got a friend who's a sailor. Here's a cable he sent me from sea."

He showed me the cable.

"Aha," I said.

Then he asked me:

"When were you born?"

"In 'thirty-two," I answered.

He beamed all over his face:

"That means we're the same age, you and me."

It really was a tremendous coincidence and I shook him by the hand.

"I bet you live in Moscow, don't you?" he said.

"You're right," I answered. "Moscow it is."

"I bet you've got a flat, haven't you? And a wife and kid and all that?"

"Right again. Just as you say."

"What do you say we go and have a meal?"

I was on the point of going with him, but at that moment my flight was called. I was going to Petropavlovsk. We swapped addresses, and I moved off towards the plane. I walked over the airfield, hunched up in the wind and rain and thinking what an odd character he was.

Meanwhile he looked at his watch, picked up his string bag and went out. He took a taxi into town. Both he and the driver had trouble finding that hump-backed country lane because he couldn't remember the name of it. All the houses in this lane looked the same, and there were great big dogs barking in all the yards. He felt a bit lost. In the end he remembered where the place was. He got out of the taxi, hung his string bag with the oranges on the fence, covered it up with a newspaper to stop neighbours or passers-by from pinching his treasure, and went back to the taxi.

"Step on it, big boy! I don't want to miss the plane."

"Where are you off to?" asked the driver.

"To Moscow, to the capital city."

He saw Tanya two days later at Khabarovsk airport, when he was already on his way back to Sakhalin, when his travellers' cheques were already spent and he had only a few red banknotes left in his pocket. She was wearing a white fur coat with a belt round her waist. She was laughing and eating sweets out of a bag, and giving them to some other girls who were also laughing. He felt weak at the knees and sat down on his suitcase. He watched Tanya unwrap the sweets like the other girls; he couldn't understand why they were all standing there and laughing, not going anywhere. Then he saw that spring had arrived, that it was a spring night, with the moon over the airfield looking like an orange. It wasn't cold now and you could just stand like this and watch the lights and dream for a moment with a sweet in your mouth....

"What's up with you, Kirpichenko?" A friend of his from Sakhalin called Manevich, also on his way back from leave, touched him on the shoulder. "Come on! They're calling our flight."

"Manevich, do you know how many miles it is to the moon?" Kirpichenko asked.

"Sounds as if you've been overdoing things a bit while you were away," said Manevich peevishly and started to walk off.

Kirpichenko grabbed him by the coat tail.

"But you're a specialist, Manevich," he begged, looking over towards Tanya. "You *must* know, dammit...."

"Well, it's about a hundred and eighty-six thousand," said Manevich, pulling himself free.

"Not far," thought Kirpichenko. "Nothing to it." He looked at Tanya and thought how he would remember her when he went up that mountain on his tractor, and how he would forget her at the top—there were too many things to think of there. He would remember her again later at the end of the way down. He would remember her all evening and all night. He would wake up in the morning with thoughts of her.

Then he got up from his suitcase.

[*Translated by* Ronald Hingley]

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Five Poems

Translated by Robert Conquest and Max Hayward

Andrei Voznesensky

Leaves and Roots

They bore him to no entombment,
They bore him to enthronement.

Greyer than a monument's
Granite, a roan tint
Like its bronze, who living
Had been a locomotive in
Full steam,
the poet, unkempt,
Found spades more divine
Than any votive lamp.

Thirst parched his lilac . . .
Like a starstream
sweat
Was steaming from his back,
An oven full of bread.

His house gaped, empty from
Attic down to hall;
No one in the dining-room.
In Russia—not a soul.

The artists depart, hats
Off
as to church,
For echoing estates,
The oak tree and the birch.

Burgeoning, they vanquish,
Vanish to new beginning
For the plains and planets,
Away from false gilding.

Above, the forests loose
Their leaves, but out of sight
In the soil fivefold roots
Are twisting, tough and tight.

translated by Robert Conquest

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Andrei Voznesensky

Evening on the Building Site

They nag me about "formalism".

Experts, what a distance
You are from life! Formalin:
You stink of it, and incense.

They've got their virgin lands, I know,
Where not one pearl of grain can grow. . . .

Art's deathly without a spark—
Human rather than divine—
For bulldozermen to mark
In the taiga's trackless zone;

It comes to them raw and salt
To straighten them up at once,
Unshaven like the sun, pelt
Peeling like bark from pines . . .

For some girl of the Chuvashi,
Brushing a blue tear away,
Brushing it—sweetly, sluttishly,
Brushing it—like a dragonfly,
To clap hands at rowdily . . .

So to me they mean little,
The spearpoints of libel,
And the furious labels.

translated by Robert Conquest

Andrei Voznesensky

You live at your aunt's

You live at your ballad-studying aunt's.
She sneezes and wears men's underpants.
The damned witch! How we hate her.

We're friends of the barn, like a good bear;
It warms us like hands stuffed in a sweater,
And smells of bee-hives.
And in Suzdal it's Easter!
In Suzdal, there's crowds, laughter, rooks.

You whisper of childhood, as we touch cheeks.
That country childhood, where horses and suns
And honeycombs glitter like icons.
And look at your hair, its honey tints . . .

I live in Russia, among snows and saints!

translated by Robert Conquest

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Victor Sosnora

Dolphins

I don't trust dolphins.
These frolics come from fishfat.
From the fact that puny sprats
Are always in the swim.
Dolphin's blood
is sluggish
in sclerotic veins.
Their joie-de-vivre
comes from the guts and roes of others.
This is the playfulness of gluttons.
I don't trust dolphins one iota,
these gracious leaps,
and giant pearly bodies.
It's a corps-de-ballet.
This snorting
and galumphing is for films,
for painters putting their talents
into handclaps of colours.
Dolphins dote on music, eh?
What's so cute,
after gorging for a week,
about understanding clarinet,
and cutting comic capers?
Taking lodgings in the sea
doesn't make them into fish!
They fly in the air,
but haven't an earthly chance of turning into birds.
Dancing dolphin ballerinas,
brutes with long beaks
and curving cruel teeth.

translated by Max Hayward

Boris Slutsky

A Footnote to the Debate about Andrey Rublyov*

No, not everything fits into a scheme,
however much you try:
Rublyov, when he took the vows
was scarcely an unbeliever.

He fell on his knees
before the Word—the one
that was in the Beginning.

* *Rublyov*, Famous Russian icon painter (c. 1360–1430

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And what's the point
of trying to turn
his archangels into peasants?

He was saved not by a swineherd
(symbolising Labour)
but quite simply
by the Saviour.

So we'll have to give up
yet another atheist in the making;
the spirit of the Dove, you see,
hovered over him
and he was meek
and mild.
No, he didn't wear a jacket
under his monastic habit!

(As for the Lord,
we'll finish him off
without Rublyov.)

translated by Max Hayward

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Bulat Okudzhava

Good Luck, Schoolboy!

THIS ISN'T an adventure story. It tells how I went to war. How I was lucky and escaped being killed. I really don't know who to thank for that. No one at all, perhaps. So don't worry about me. I'm safe and sound. Some people will be pleased to hear the news, and others, of course, will be sad. But I'm alive. That's all there is to it. You can't please everyone.

A Sloppy Type

IN MY CHILDHOOD I used to cry a lot. As a boy I cried less, and in my 'teens only twice. The first time was one evening just before the war. I said to a girl-friend I had then —and I said it with studied indifference:

"Then in that case it's all over."

"In that case it's all over," she agreed with astonishing calm, and promptly walked away. Then I began crying because she was leaving me, and I wiped away the tears with the palm of my hand. The second time I cried was just now: here in the Mozdok Steppes. I'm taking a very important package to the regimental commander. Where the hell can the man be? The sand dunes all look the same. It's night. I've only been at the front two days. But if you fail to carry out your mission, they shoot you. And I'm only eighteen.

Who told me they shoot you? It was Nick Grinchenko, just as I was setting out. He smiled sweetly as he said it.

"Don't give up; if you do, it's the firing squad."

They'll put me against the wall. But there aren't any walls here. So they'll march me out into the fields....

BULAT OKUDZHAVA *is a young Georgian writer of Georgian-Armenian origin. His story (several episodes of which have been omitted) was translated by John Richardson.*

And I wipe away the tears. "Your son showed cowardice in face of..." that's how the announcement will start. Why did they pick on me to deliver the package? What about Nick Grinchenko? He's a tough, smart lad. He would have found his way there all right. By now he'd be sitting in the warm headquarters dug-out. He'd be drinking tea out of a mug. He'd be winking at the girl radio-operators and smiling sweetly at them.

Suppose I tread on a landmine? They'll find me in the morning. The regimental commander will say to the battery commander:

"What was the point of sending an inexperienced soldier, Lt. Burakov? You didn't give him a chance to get used to his surroundings. Your negligence has cost us a good man."

"Your son was killed in action while carrying out an important mission..." that's how the announcement would start.

"Hey, where are you going?"

It's me they're shouting at. I see a small trench and someone waving from it. Where the hell do they think I'm going?

"Halt!" shouts someone behind me.

I stop.

"Come here...."

I go over. Someone drags me into the trench by the sleeve.

"Where were you going?" they ask grumpily.

I explain.

"Don't you know there are Germans over there? Another thirty yards and...."

They explain. It's one of our advance observation points. Then they lead me to a dug-out, which takes a long time to reach. The regimental commander reads the report and keeps glancing at me. I feel small and insignificant. I look at my rather unclassical legs which are spindly and wrapped in puttees. And then at the soldier's sturdy knee-boots. I suppose I must look ridiculous. But no one laughs. Even the pretty radio-operator looks past me. If I'd been

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wearing knee-boots and a smart officer's greatcoat.... If only they'd give me some tea. I'd sit at the table made out of a crate and talk to that pretty girl. Obviously, in my present state....

"Go back to the battery," snaps the commander, "and tell your commanding officer not to send me any more reports of this kind."

He emphasises the words "of this kind."

"All right," I reply. And I hear the girl snigger. She looks at me and sniggers.

"How long have you been in the army?" asks the colonel.

"A month."

"In the army you're supposed to say 'Yes, sir' and not 'all right,' and... you've got your toes together and heels apart."

"A sloppy type," says someone from a dark corner.

"I know," I say. And I walk out. I practically run.

Again the steppes. It's snowing, and silent. Sometimes it's impossible to believe this is an advance post at the front, and that there's danger all round. This time I won't lose my way.

I imagine how ridiculous I must have looked with my feet apart, my hands in my greatcoat pockets and forage-cap pulled down over my ears. And the girl was so pretty.... They didn't even give me any tea. When Nick Grinchenko talks to officers, he always half-grins. Just a bit. He doesn't argue, he just half-grins. Then he gives a really smart salute and says "Yes, sir." And I hear him saying under his breath, "Go on, give me orders. I know your type." And he does, too. But my ankle-boots are good and strong. That's a good thing. A heavy, manly foot. It makes the snow crunch. All I need is a fur cap with ear-flaps and I wouldn't look such a misery. Anyway, I'll soon be back. I'll make my report and drink lots of hot tea. I'll have a nap. I have a right to, now.

I've got a sub-machine gun across my shoulder, two grenades slung on one side of my belt, and a gas-mask on the other. I must look pretty warlike. Somebody once said belligerence was a sign of cowardice. But I'm not a coward, am I? When I was in the third form at school I had a row with Volodka Anilov. I was the first to shout out "All right, let's fight it out!" and then felt terribly scared. So we went behind the school building. The other boys crowded round. He hit me first on the arm.

"So that's your game?" I cried, and punched him in the shoulder. Then we kept shouting insults at one another, neither of us wanting to be the first to attack.

Suddenly I wanted to laugh and said: "Listen, I'm going to let you have it in the kisser...."

"Just you try," he said, putting up his fists.

"Or you'll bash me. There'll be blood anyway. What's the difference?"

He suddenly calmed down. We shook hands according to the rules. But we weren't friends again after that.

Am I a coward?

These were the dunes where we stopped yesterday.

"Everyone is here," said Lt. Burakov.

"Where are we?" they asked him.

"It's the advance line."

Like the rest of us, it was his first time at the front. That's why he spoke so pompously and proudly.

"Then where are the Germans?"

"The Germans are over there."

"Over there" we could see dunes covered with occasional patches of withered scrub. Then it struck me I wasn't the least bit scared. And I was surprised how easily the lieutenant had determined the enemy's position.

War

I'VE GOT to know you, war. I've got large welts on the palms of my hands. And a noise in my head. I feel sleepy. Are you trying to make me forget everything I'm used to? Are you trying to teach me to obey myself unquestioningly? The shouts of the officer—run, do it, bellow "yessir," get down, crawl, fall asleep on the march. The swish of a mortar shell—bury yourself in the ground, dig it up with your nose, with your hands, with your feet, with the whole of your body, not feeling frightened while you do it, not thinking about it. The mess-tin full of barley soup—secrete gastric juices, get ready, stuff yourself full, wipe your spoon clean with grass. Comrades are dying—dig a grave, cover up with earth, fire mechanically into the air, three times....

I've learnt a lot already. Pretending I'm not hungry. Pretending I'm not cold. Pretending I'm not sorry for anyone. I only want to sleep, sleep, sleep....

Like an idiot I've lost my spoon. An ordinary spoon. Aluminium. Tarnished, with a jagged edge. Even so, a spoon. A very important tool. I've nothing to eat with. I drink my soup straight from the mess-tin. What about por-

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ridge? I've adapted a piece of wood. A splint. I eat my porridge with a splint. Who can I ask for one? Everybody guards his spoon. None of them are idiots. But I have a piece of wood.

Sashka Zolotarev is making notches on a stick. To remind him of the casualties.

Nick Grinchenko's lips curl into a nasty smile.

"Don't fret, Sashka, there'll be enough girls left for all of us."

Zolotarev is silent. I am silent. The Germans are silent. To-day.

Lieutenant Burakov goes about unshaven. It's for show, I'm sure of that. No order to open fire. There's a parley going on. There goes our commanding officer making a round of the mortar crews. Meantime the mortars are in the trenches, in a hollow. And the trenches have been dug in accordance with army regulations. But we don't study the regulations.

Gunner Gavrilov comes over. He sits down. He looks at the cigarette I've rolled. "What are you smoking your head off like that for?"

"Why?"

"The wind's blowing the sparks about. It's dark outside. They'll be seen," he says, and looks round.

I stub out the cigarette against the sole of my boot. Sparks fly all over the place like a firework. And all at once a six-barrel mortar on the German side responds. The shell lands with a crump somewhere to the rear of us. And Gavrilov crawls over the snow.

"I ——ing well told you so!" he shouts.

Bang after bang. Bang after bang. Closer and closer.... My mates run past me to their mortars. While I stay sitting on the snow.... It's my fault. How will I ever face them again? Here comes Lt. Burakov. He's shouting something. And the shells keep raining down, raining down.

Then I get up and start running too and shouting:

"Comrade Lieutenant! Comrade Lieutenant!"

The first mortar grunts. It gives you a comforting feeling. Just as though we'd found strong, cool-headed friends. Then the shouting dies down. Now all four mortars are firing somewhere into the sky from the hollow. And only the telephonist, skinny young Gurgenidze, gives a screech of delight.

"A hit! A hit!"

I do what I am supposed to. I drag a box of mortar shells out of the shelter. How strong I am. And I'm not a bit afraid. I drag over the boxes. Rumbling, shouting, and an acrid smell of explosive. Everything's confused. God, what a fight! A real massacre! Clouds of smoke everywhere. No, I'm making it all up. Not one shell has been aimed at us. It's us making all the noise. But I'm the culprit. And everyone knows. And they'll all be waiting for me to tell them I'm sorry.

It's already getting dark. My back hurts. I can hardly manage to pick up the snow and swallow it.

"All clear!" shouts Gurgenidze.

I'll tell the battery commander everything. Let them see I'm not trying to hide anything.

"Comrade Lieutenant."

He's sitting on the edge of the trench and running his finger over the map. He looks at me and I understand; he's waiting for me to own up.

"It's all my fault.... I just didn't think.... Do what you like with me...."

"And what am I supposed to do with you?" he asks thoughtfully. "What have you been up to?"

Is he joking? Or has he forgotten? I tell him everything. I get it off my chest. He looks at me in astonishment. Then he shrugs his shoulders.

"Listen. Go and have a rest. What are you talking about, your cigarette? We merely launched an attack. We had to start firing. Go on, go away."

I go away.

"See you don't fall asleep. Or you'll freeze," he calls after me.

AN HOUR LATER we're on our feet again. We're firing at the Germans again. Attack. I can't see one. How can it be an attack if we stay in one spot? Is that how it's always going to be? Rumbling, the smell of explosive, Gurgenidze shouting "It's a hit! It's not a hit!" and this wretched hollow, from which you can't see anything. And an attack somewhere or other. Tanks rolling along, infantry, cavalry, people singing the International, falling dead without letting go of the colours.

And when there's a brief lull, I run to the observation point. I'll have a look, even if it's only out of the corner of my eye and see what the attack's like. I'll breathe it in. After all, the O.P. isn't anything special, it's simply a hill-top, and the observers are lying on the side there with their heads slightly raised, and the battery commander Burakov is looking through a stereo-telescope. So I crawl up the steep hill-

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side and raise myself waist-high. And I hear birds singing. Birds!

Someone drags me down by the feet.

"Do you want to get yourself killed?" hisses Burakov. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"I wanted to have a look," I answer.

The observers laugh.

"There are birds over there," I say.

"Birds?" repeats the commander.

"Yes, birds."

"What birds?" asks telephonist Kuzin from a trench.

"Birds," I answer, beginning to wonder what it's all about myself.

"Do you really think those are birds?" asks the battery commander wearily.

"Birds indeed!" laughs Kuzin.

I begin to see the point. One of the observers hangs his cap on the end of a stick and raises it in the air. All at once the birds start singing.

"Got it?" asks Burakov.

He's a nice chap. Anyone else would have been livid with fury and cursed like hell. He's a nice fellow is our battery commander. I would have been killed a moment ago but for him. It was probably he who pulled me down by the feet.

It's getting darker and darker. The grey dusk envelops the hill. A long, long way away I can hear a machine-gun firing.

"Machine-gun!" I shout.

No one pays any attention.

"They're ours," says battery commander Burakov. "We start any moment." Then he turns to me and says, "All right then, have a look."

I squat down by the telescope and look. I see the steppes. A settlement stretches in a line across the far edge against a background of grey sky. And tracer bullets keep flying in coloured lines from one end of it to the other. Then I hear the rattle of machine-guns and the staccato sound of sub-machine-guns. But I can't see any attack. I can't see any people.

"Come on, come on!" shouts someone behind me.

"Where to?"

And then I suddenly catch sight of something—solitary figures running across the steppes, all hunched up. But only a few of them.

"That's enough," says the commander. "Go back to the battery."

I roll down the hill. I run. And a jeep comes floating towards me, bumping up and down over the hillocks. There's a general sitting inside. I don't know what to do; should I run past or march past saluting as I go....

The general is purple. He doesn't see me. He's waving his hands all over the place. And the jeep gets near the observation point. The battery commander is already standing to attention. And the telescope is standing motionless on its three legs too.

And the general jumps out of the jeep and hurries over to the commander.

"You're firing on your own men! Your own men!"

The battery commander is silent. But his head moves from side to side.

Then the general looks through the telescope, and Burakov explains something to him. And the general shakes him by the hand....

Wonders never cease! I think to myself.

"Cease fire!" calls Kuzin into his telephone.

The battery is silent. Just as if everyone were listening for something. And the mortars are sitting on their haunches like dogs and not making any noise.

"What's the matter with your hands?" asks the sergeant-major.

My palms are covered with blood. I can't imagine where the blood could have come from. I shrug my shoulders.

"It's from the boxes of shells," says Shongin.

They'll bandage them for me presently.

The sergeant-major turns and leaves. He's probably gone to fetch the medical orderly. I stand with outstretched hands. They must have bled a tremendous amount! Someone will come and bandage them, and I'll write a letter home....

"Go and wash your hands," says the sergeant-major, turning round. "We're about to change position."

The Little Bell is a Gift from Valdai

HELP ME. Save me. I don't want to die. A small piece of lead in the heart, or the head, and I've had it. And then my warm body won't be warm any longer? Let there be suffering. Who said I was afraid of suffering? It was back at home that I was afraid of so many things. At home. But now I've got to know everything, tried everything. Isn't that enough for one person to know? I'm fit to live, aren't I? Help me. Why, it's ridiculous to kill somebody who hasn't had time to do anything. I didn't even get as far as the fourth form.

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Help me. I don't mean with love. To hell with that, with love. I'm content not to love. Anyway, I already have. If it comes to that, I've had my fill of love. I've got a mother, what will happen to her? And you know how nice it feels when your mother strokes your head. I haven't had time to forget it. I haven't really been anywhere worth while yet. For instance, I haven't visited Valdai. And I should see what Valdai looks like. Shouldn't I? Didn't someone write... *"And the little bell is a gift from Valdai"*? I can't even write down the lines. Help me. I'll go through it all. To the bitter end. I'll shoot at the fascists like a sniper; I'll fight tanks single-handed; I'll go hungry, I'll go without sleep, I'll stand pain....

Who am I saying all this to? Who am I asking for help? Perhaps the logs in this dugout? They're not all that pleased about being here either. After all, not too long ago they were pine trees and still rustled their leaves.... And do you remember the warm railway car as we were leaving for the front? Yes, of course, I remember. We stood by the coach door and sang some kind of marching song. And we held our heads high. But the troop train was in a siding. Where was it? It was the Kursk Station. They wouldn't let us go home. I only just managed to telephone home. None of the family was there. Only Irina Makarovna, the old woman next door. An old bitch. The way she got on my nerves! She asked me where the troop train was.

"What a pity," she said hypocritically. "Your mother won't be able to see you."

I hung up and went back to my mates. An hour later she suddenly appeared on the platform and pushed a bundle into my hands. And then later on, when we were singing, she stood among a group of women looking on. What is her interest in me? Good-bye, Irina Makarovna! Forgive me. I couldn't have known, could I? I could never understand it. Perhaps you're the person I ought to ask to protect me. Well then, protect me! I don't want to die. I'm telling you straight and I'm not ashamed....

THE BUNDLE CONTAINED some dry biscuits and a quart of sunflower seed oil. And I swore I'd keep one biscuit as a souvenir. I ate it. Does that mean I can't even do a simple thing like that? Wasn't it me who remained in full view when the Heinkel swooped down and everyone jumped into the trenches?

"Take cover quickly!" they shouted at me.

But I didn't. I wandered about, laughing out loud. I just don't want to let everyone see me trembling. If only they'd known how I felt inside! No one must know how scared I am. But can I even tell myself the truth? That's what I mean. I'm my own judge.... I have the right to be. I'm not like Fedya Lyubimov. Do you remember Fedya Lyubimov? Yes, of course, I remember him. He lives in the same flat as we do. When the war broke out, he used to come into the kitchen in the evening and say: "Those German swine are pushing forward. We've all got to give a hand. As soon as my arm's better, I'm going to join up."

"You'll be called up anyway, Fedya," people used to say.

"That's not the point. Everybody'll be called up eventually. When the country's in danger, you shouldn't wait until you're called up."

And he used to ask me: "Do you love your country?"

"Yes," I replied. I was taught that in the first form at school.

Then one day I bumped into him in the recruiting office. He didn't see me. He was talking to a captain.

"I've brought my exemption certificate, sir," he was saying.

"What exemption?"

"Reserved occupation. As a specialist I'm exempt from military service. They don't want to release me from the job I'm doing."

"Then go in there and register. If you're exempt, there's nothing we can do," said the captain.

If you're exempt, there's nothing we can do. So that's it, Fedya. What kind of reserved occupation was that—working in a watch-repair shop in the Arbat? So off goes Fedya to register. He passed me. He saw me. He stopped, and went red.

"Did you see?" he asked. "Well, anyway, who wants to die?"

He's probably still exempt. Like a famous engineer or a great actor.

We didn't build this shelter. It's a good one. It was obviously abandoned in a hurry. Someone dropped a photo of a girl over there. It's a picture of a plain-looking girl smiling. Still, someone loved her. Why did he forget to take it with him?

"What about you, Sashka," I asked, "couldn't you get exemption?"

"Who could have arranged that?" said

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Sashka. "Very few people manage to get exemption."

"If you'd given something to the right person," said Nick Grinchenko, "you'd have got exempted."

"Doesn't that cost a lot?" asked Sashka.

"Three thousand roubles or so. You could have sold off some trash or other and got the money that way."

"Yes, I could've. My desk alone is worth three thousand."

"Then you could have given them that!"

"Cut it out!" said Sashka, waving his hand in disgust.

"Then why didn't *you* get exempted?" asks Shongin angrily.

"Because I didn't have any money," laughs Nick.

"You talk too much," says Shongin.

"And Where Is Your Daughter?"

How well everything's working out. To-morrow I'll write home. I'm alive. What's left of the battery? Two mortars and not more than thirty men. But I'm alive, and not even scratched. To-morrow I'll write home. Home.

"Let's knock at the door," says Sashka Zolotarev.

Night. A tumble-down peasant dwelling. The windows are unlit.

I knock on the shutter. "Madam, would you be so good as to...." No answer. "Madam, I'm still alive. Oh, if you only knew what it was like!" I knock at the shutter. "The officer's boots go here, the uniform over there in the wardrobe, the sword goes on the chair...." "I thank you.... And where is your daughter?"

"Sleep... sleep... sleep," says Nick.

I knock at the shutter. "Grouse?... Cheese?... Wine?..."

"Oh, thank you very much. A slice of cold veal and some rum. I'm a soldier, Madam." I knock at the shutter.

"We'll freeze to death."

"Let's go on to the next one."

"Just knock once more."

I knock on the shutter. Sashka knocks on the shutter. Nick knocks on the shutter.

"Here's your room. Good-night!" "Good-night, Madam. And where is your daughter?"

"What do you want?"

A woman is standing at the open door. She is all wrapped up.

"We'd like to stay the night here, lady."

"We're the only ones left alive," say I.

"How nice for you..." says the woman. "You would have to turn up, wouldn't you."

"Can we come in?" asks Nick.

"It certainly is cold," says Sashka.

"We'll only stay overnight and then leave," I say.

It's cold in the hallway. The room inside is warm. A small lamp is giving off a lot of smoke. Someone is tossing and turning on a bunk over the stove. The room is so small. How are we all going to lie down? The woman takes off her kerchief. She's quite young.

"Lie down there," she says to Nick, pointing to a corner. A good place for Nick. "And you come here," she says to Sashka.

Zolotarev lies down on his greatcoat, having spread it out under the table. And Nick takes off his outer clothing in silence. They put me up on a small bench beneath the stove. There's only room to lie on my side. To hell with it! Who cares as long as you can stretch out. And the woman herself lies down on a bed. A camp-bed. Covered with some bits of cloth. She crawls under the cloth, without taking off her heavy outer coat.

I spread my greatcoat on the bench. The blue flame of the lamp goes out. A hand strokes my hair.

"Who's that?"

"What does it matter," says a quiet voice from the stove. "Crawl over here; it's warm over here."

"Manya," says the woman, "just you watch yourself...."

"Who asked you anything?" says Manya from the stove. And her hand keeps stroking my hair.

"Come over here."

"Wait a moment, I must take my knee-boots off."

"Come on. What does it matter?"

Supposing we're heard? "Where's your daughter, Madam?" Supposing we're heard? There's a daughter for you! It's warm close to Manya. If I touch her, there'll be hell to pay. Manya.... Is that what you're really called?

"What's your name?"

"Maria Andreyevna."

For heaven's sake! How can you.... She has a warm rubbery stomach and small clutching hands.

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen. Why?"

"Sh!"

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"Why? Why?"

"They'll hear...."

"Let them.... Move closer."

"Manya," says the woman, "just you behave...."

"I'll decide that," says Manya.

Down below Sashka gives a cough. And Nick says:

"Aren't you cold, lady?"

And Maria entwines herself around me so tightly that I don't know which is her and which is me. We're all mixed up.

"How your heart is thumping," she laughs right in my ear. "Are you scared or something?"

And Nick asks: "Don't you feel cold, missus?"

Is it as simple as that? Is everyone else the same?

"What's the matter with you? Aren't you alive?"

"Let go!"

"I'm only joking, you dunce."

"Let me go, Maria."

"She's just a silly little fool," says the woman.

"Let go, or there'll be trouble."

"Well, let's lie still for a bit, like this. All right?"

"Let go!"

"Then go back to your own bench if you find it so crowded."

...It's cooler on the bench. Sashka gives a cough. Nick says from his corner:

"Lady, you must be freezing under those rags. Do you want me to cover you over with my greatcoat?"

...Somebody's walking about. And whispering. It's a hurried, quiet whisper. I can't make out the words. It's probably Maria on the stove over there. Or perhaps it's the woman. Perhaps it isn't whispering, but the sound of silence. But someone's sobbing. It must be hard living in this crowded little place. But tomorrow they'll make fun of me. They will, I know they will.... And it serves me right. She suggested it herself. She tried to talk me into it. They'll take a rise out of me. I'll get up early to-morrow and go to another hut, or to the H.Q.; or wait by the lorries. And she was as warm as toast, that Maria Andreyevna. She'll laugh first. Sixteen! Nick calls girls like that "peaches and cream." And who can that be crying? Or is it outside the window?

"Who's that?" I ask.

"Don't shout," says the woman. "Go to sleep."

I must be hearing things. And they'll make fun of me.... But there *is* someone crying. Or is it Maria crying?

On the Road

WE SET OFF for the army base to fetch the mortars. We means Lieutenant Karpov, the sergeant-major, Sashka Zolotarev, and I.

Karpov gets in front with the driver while we take our places in the back of our old one-and-a-half tonner.

And off we go. I'm fed up with sitting around in that idiotic village. Driving about is better. And everyone is sick of it. Sashka and I grin and wink at each other.

The sergeant-major has seated himself near the driver's cabin on a soft seat of empty American sacks. He leans against the cabin with his hands crossed on his stomach and his short legs stretched out, and shuts his eyes.

"We're off, lads," he says. "Watch you don't fall out while I'm having a snooze."

We're on the move.

The lorry moves along easily on account of the slight frost. It speeds from hill to hill. And in front nothing but more hills. And behind us as well. We have forty kilometres to go in all. That's nothing. I'll be able to see how they're getting on in the rear.

The road is not empty. Lorries, lorries, lorries.

Tanks. Infantry.... All on their way to the front lines.

"The Siberians gave the Germans a licking near Moscow," says Sashka. "But for them, heaven knows what would have happened."

"Siberians are all the same height," say I. "Six feet. Specially selected."

"Idiots," says the sergeant-major without opening his eyes. "Height's got nothing to do with it. It was the equipment that decided everything at Moscow, the equipment...."

What's the point of arguing, let him say what he likes. I know exactly what happened there. I was told by eye-witnesses. As soon as they heard the Siberians were on the way, the Germans made for the south without stopping. I know. Because the Siberians stood to the death. They're all hunters, bear-trappers. They face death from early childhood. They're used to it. What about us, Sashka and me? Could we do that? Supposing the tanks came right for us, we'd just shut our eyes. And not because we're

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yellow. It's just that we aren't used to it. Would I be able to go for a tank? No, I wouldn't. It's easier with mortars. For that you can be a long way from the front line, just firing away and changing your position. But face to face.... It's a good thing we aren't infantry.

Suddenly our lorry stops. The road ahead is deserted. Except for a tiny lone soldier a long, long way away, standing and looking at us. The sergeant-major is asleep. Sashka and I jump out. Lt. Karpov is asleep in front. His lower lip is drooping like an old man's. The driver has raised the hood.

The tiny soldier comes running towards us. A tiny soldier. He couldn't be any smaller. He runs towards us waving his arms.

"Look, look," says Sashka, "here's a Siberian!"

I laugh. The soldier is certainly very small. Then he comes so near that I see it isn't a soldier, but a little girl. She's wearing a great-coat, neatly belted with a strap, and she has a sergeant-major's insignia on her shoulder-boards. Her face is tiny and her nose just a button.

"Give me a lift, boys, I've been standing about for a whole hour. All the lorries are going towards the front—none of them in the other direction. And I have to get there desperately."

I help her clamber into the back of the lorry. Sashka and I give her our ground-sheets and she sits down on them.

"Where are you from, boys?"

We nod towards the front line.

"And has the Fifteenth already left?"

Sashka and I exchange glances and shrug our shoulders.

The lorry finally sets off again. The sergeant-major is still asleep. He's even snoring slightly.

"That's wonderful," says the girl and laughs, "he's snoring as though he was home in bed."

"He likes to have a snooze," says Sashka.

When she laughs, her lips turn up at the corners like a clown's. Sergeant-major! And I'm only a private. But where can this tiny, skinny little girl be from? What's happened? Everyone's been seized up, carried away, mixed up together. School children crawl through trenches, die of wounds, return home armless, legless.... A little girl becomes a sergeant-major. What's happened?

"The base was raided by forty Junkers yesterday," she said. "It was ghastly. We were dropping on our feet...."

"But what would you have done at the front then?" asks Sashka. "After all, it's worse there."

"I probably would have cried," she says and laughs.

What's happened? She would have cried, of course. I almost cried, too. Just before the war I saw a film. All the soldiers in it were real men —grown up and seasoned, and knew what they were doing. But I don't know, Sashka doesn't know, and this little girl doesn't know either. ...And Karpov and the sergeant-major are asleep.

"My name's Masha," she says. "I'm a sergeant-major in the medical corps. All the others in the class were boys."

"And you like to brag a little, don't you, sergeant-major?" says Sashka.

The sergeant-major wakes up. He stares at Masha for some moments.

"How did you get in here?" he asks.

"You don't need to use that tone of voice," says Masha.

The sergeant-major's cap slides on to the back of his head.

"Who do you think you're talking to?"

"It's amazing how ignorant you can get," she says, turning to us.

I want to laugh. The sergeant-major stares at her for some time and then notices her shoulder-boards.

"I asked you, sergeant-major, where you come from."

The lorry stops again. The driver raises the hood again. Karpov gets out of the front.

"How are you getting on?" he asks us.

"Your men got frozen stiff in the back while you were having a sleep," says Masha.

"Oho, what a wonderful passenger!" says Karpov. "And what about you, aren't you frozen too?"

And he invites her to sit up front.

She skips out of the back and waves good-bye to us.

How nice and warm it must be in the front. The air is hot from the engine and the seats are soft. The road stretches in front of you like a ribbon.

Karpov is behind her.

"No, no, perhaps I should go in the back again," she says.

"Stay where you are," says Karpov coldly. And he climbs in the back.

"What have you got your legs spread out for, Zolotarev?" he says. "Can't you sit like a human being?"

We're off again. It's getting dark. If we don't reach the base within half an hour, I'll be frozen

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stiff. Sashka has wrapped himself up so that only his nose is visible. His bulbous, red nose.

"A man needs a bed, not the back of a truck," he grumbles. "And a warm stove, and a good meal, and love. . . ."

"And who's going to do the work, laddie?" asks the sergeant-major.

When I get home, I'm going to study properly. I'll go to bed at ten o'clock. In winter I'll wear a fur coat and no one will ever get the better of me. . . .

What a Joke

AN ARMOURED CAR is a very adaptable vehicle. It looks just like a grey beetle. It can go anywhere and can get out of anywhere. It's snug inside. Warm. The electric heater works. You can even have a sleep as you go.

I am not asleep. I'm dozing a little. What will happen this evening when we catch up with the battery? Perhaps there'll be fierce fighting. Perhaps we won't find any of them alive. Anyway, when I get there, I'll wait for a letter. But Sashka's asleep. Soundly. And Karpov is sitting next to the driver and is either asleep or is just staring fixedly at the broken road.

The sergeant-major brought the boots. But supposing I don't get a pair?

"Comrade Lieutenant," I say, "if the road had been good, we would have just whizzed along, wouldn't we?"

But Karpov doesn't reply. Must be asleep.

"Fedosyev," I say to the driver, "it's nice here inside the car. . . ."

"My name's not Fedosyev," says the driver, "it's Fedoseyev. You're mixing me up with someone else. People call me Fedoskin and all sorts of other names. But I'm Fedoseyev. Who bothers in wartime anyway, Fedoseyev or Fedosyev? There isn't time to bother. Someone once called me Fedishkin. What a joke. But I'm Fedoseyev. I've been Fedoseyev for forty years. From the day I was born, as they say."

We are carrying a cask of wine. It's for the whole battery, the front-line ration.

"There's a nice smell of wine," says Fedoseyev.

He has pink, slightly splayed lips, white eyebrows, and his teeth are large with gaps in between. He talks in a sing-song voice. I don't suppose he ever loses his temper. He makes you feel at ease and secure.

"There's a nice smell of wine," says Fedoseyev.

The cask is enormous. The hole is plugged with a bung. Firmly. Can't be knocked out. Anyway, even if it could be, how would we get at the wine. They're receiving reinforcements at the present moment at the battery. Rookies. Young boys, probably. Standing goggling around them. What a joke. School-kids. Nick Grinchenko is probably strutting about in front of them. Showing off. And Shongin is probably smoking and saying to Nick, "You talk too much, Grinchenko!" And the sergeant-major has brought the boots. Supposing I don't get a pair?

"Fedoseyev, what would happen if you stepped on the gas a bit?" I ask.

"Our speed would be increased," says Fedoseyev. "We'd go faster. That's if I stepped on the gas. Only I can't here. The road's too bad. The car will jump all over the place if I do."

"Let it."

"What's the point?"

"I'd like to see what it's like."

"A pity to spoil the car. And people are sleeping. Let them sleep on. We're the only ones who aren't. So let them be."

What if I don't get the boots though? Isn't he sorry for me? You ought to speed up a bit, Fedoseyev. We may still have time.

"There's a nice smell of wine," says Fedoseyev.

There really is a smell of wine. The cask gives off an aroma. And I'm hungry. Except that we can't drink the wine. It's in the cask, and the bung is the size of a man's fist.

"We can pull out the bung," says Sashka to me in a whisper.

If Karpov hears us, we'll catch it. . . .

"Of course you can," says Karpov without turning his head.

"Just say the word and it'll be out in a second," says Fedoseyev.

We turn off the road and stop by a solitary pole. We pull out the bung. It's easy. It slides out of the hole as though greased. And a heady smell of wine is wafted through the frosty air, getting stronger and stronger.

"Each person can sample his ration, and no more," says Karpov.

"Wish I had something to eat with it," says Sashka.

"We'll get something to eat at the battery," says Karpov.

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Fedoseyev does it very simply. He takes the rubber tube used for siphoning petrol and lowers one end into the cask.

"Hold out your mess-tins," laughs Sashka, "so none of it spills."

The golden wine pours into each mess-tin held up to it. Sashka puts his nose to it. We watch him.

"It stinks of petrol," he says.

"Doesn't matter," says Karpov. "That doesn't matter."

He takes a few mouthfuls.

"Pure petrol," he says and spits it out.

"Difficult to avoid that," says Fedoseyev. "After all, it's a petrol tube. Wait, let me have a taste."

We drink up our samples. The wine is strong. You can soon tell that.

"You mustn't breathe while drinking," says Sashka.

"Petrol fumes are very good for you," says Fedoseyev. "They prevent all illnesses. You just have to get used to the smell. It doesn't worry me. Question of habit. Well, come on, give me a mess-tin full."

"Now give everybody a full ration," says Karpov.

"How much is the ration?" I ask.

No one can tell me how much the ration is?

"Until there's none left."

"Come on, now," says Karpov. "None of those tricks."

I know exactly what will happen. I'll drink it up and a warm feeling will steal all over my body. I shall feel hot, weak, and funny inside.

"Don't you drink too much, Fedoseyev," says Karpov. "You have to drive."

"It's like mineral water," says Fedoseyev. "I could drink three pints of this stuff and not bat an eyelid. It's just mineral water."

"That's right," says Sashka, "it's certainly not vodka, mate."

I can't drink any more. There's a lot left in the mess-tin, but I can't take any more. The skin of my lips has somehow tightened. I can't open my mouth properly. And Sashka's chin is all covered with wine. Hardly does he stop for a breath than he's at the mess-tin again. And Karpov clutches hold of the armoured car.

"I'm so weak with hunger, damn it," he says.

"We've got to go," says Fedoseyev, and climbs in front.

"A fine place to stop," says Karpov. "Right in the middle of the bumps. You can barely keep upright. There's a more level stretch of ground over there."

"You've had too much," Sashka says to Karpov.

"I can't drink this stuff. I like plain vodka..." says Karpov.

"What's your first name?" asks Sashka.

"Alexei," says Karpov.

His cheeks are bright red. So are Sashka's. They're like brothers.

We get into the car.

"Do you want some more, Alek?" asks Sashka.

Karpov shakes his head. Sashka sucks the tube. Wine pours into the mess-tin.

"Here, have another drink." Sashka pushes the mess-tin at Karpov. "Have some of this lemonade, Alek."

Sashka's arms are short, like two tree stumps, and he has a wine cask instead of a head. That's a real head!

"And where are you going to put the bung?" I ask with a laugh. "Not in your mouth, I hope."

But Sashka nods his cask-head and says nothing.

"Where's the tube?" asks Fedoseyev.

"In the cask," says Sashka.

"Having a swim," I laugh.

"Having a swim?" says Karpov. "I didn't see it."

"You're a fine one, Alek," I say.

He's a good fellow, that Karpov. There was no point in my getting annoyed at him. He now has such a hurt look on his face. I tickle his neck.

"Come on, Alek, buck up."

Sashka is sleeping with his head against the cask. Let him sleep. He's a good fellow, too. They all are. When I get those boots, I'll show them how to fight.

"Sashka, put the stopper back in the cask. The smell is sickening."

But Sashka is crying. Big tears run down his cheeks. Like a child.

"Where am I going?" he sobs. "What the hell do I want to go with you all for? Klava's waiting for me. Klava, where are you?..."

What a sickening smell. A mixture of wine and petrol. Supposing you mix perfume and peaches? It's still sickening. What about roses and boot-polish? I wouldn't mind if he just whined away to himself softly, just a tiny bit like a mosquito; then it would be easier.

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"What's the matter, kid, do you feel ill?" asks Fedoseyev.

I don't feel ill. Only the smell is sickening. And I can't stretch out my legs. There's no room.

"Come and see me," says Karpov, "I'll show you my dog."

"Where is that?"

"Volga Street, No. 8."

"What a joke," says Fedoseyev.

And Sashka is weeping huge tears. He's thinking about his Klava, and wiping away the tears with his hand. I don't feel like crying. Why should I? And Sashka has a cask instead of a head. It whirls round and round. There's nothing you can do.

"They will make you forget me, Klava.... Buy a packet of cigarettes to give me as a keepsake. We'll say good-bye at the doorway. Klava, buy yourself a bright kerchief..." can be heard from the cask..."and if you come here, I'll give you more money...."

But I'm not crying. I'd do better to whimper. You can breathe easier that way. Because this damned smell of wine....

"Where are we going?"

"To the battery," says Fedoseyev. "There they go, flying along."

"You're not drunk, are you, Fedoseyev? Who's flying along? Those are rockets, aren't they? Are you taking us to the front line?"

"That's right. There it is, just over there."

"What do I want with that, Fedoseyev?"

"...there's nothing for me to do there."

"Drop in for a cup of tea."

I could do with some tea, too. This damned smell....

I open my eyes. The car has stopped. Firing can clearly be heard ahead of us. My head's fuzzy. Sashka's asleep. Karpov's asleep. With his head thrown back and his mouth open. We drank wine. It's sickening.

"Why have we stopped?"

"We've arrived. But the battery isn't here. There's no one here," says Fedoseyev. "The front has moved. We'll have to catch it up.... But you were good. How did you like it, eh?"

The car moves off. The headlights are out. Thick snow is falling making everything look bright. Transparently bright. Like in a dream. I'm dreaming. Or am I still drunk? The offensive is in progress, and we got high. I'm seeing things—a figure in white in front of us. It's standing in the road. It's raised its hand. In one hand it has a sub-machine-gun and in the other a masked torch. The yellow light doesn't illuminate anything.

"Stop, Fedoseyev," I say.

The car stops. Karpov has woken up. He looks at the figure, and reaches towards his holster.

"They're ours," says Fedoseyev. "Let's find out what's wrong."

Supposing they're Germans. Where's my machine-gun. It's not there. It must be somewhere under the cask of wine. And the figure is coming nearer and nearer. Fedoseyev flings open the doors.

"Help us, quickly," cries the figure. "Some of our fellows have been killed. We've got to bury them."

The figure comes up to the car. It's a soldier. He's covered in snow. One side of his greatcoat has been ripped off.

"What were they hit by?" asks Karpov and yawns.

He yawns as though he had just climbed out of bed. He yawns while some of our soldiers lie dead. The man must be drunk.

"Hit by bullets," I say.

"You keep out of this," says Karpov. "Where are the dead?"

The soldier waves the torch.

"Over there. Seven of them," he says. "Two of us are alive. Help us."

"There's fighting going on," says Karpov. "We can't afford to be late at the battery."

"We're late anyway," says Fedoseyev.

"We shouldn't have drunk the wine," I say, and am amazed at my own boldness.

But Karpov looks at me and says nothing, because there's nothing for him to say.

"We were all filthy drunk, while there's fighting going on over there," I say loudly. "Come on, Fedoseyev."

We clamber out of the car. So does Karpov. In silence. Then comes Sashka, half-asleep. We take spades, a pick, and follow the soldier.

"You've never seen the like of it. There's been nothing like it since the beginning. For six hours we were pounding each other. Then we had just gone forward."

We walk across the bumpy snow-covered ground. No, it's not a dream. The terrible fighting is still going on in the distance. I can hear it clearly. Well, I've certainly distinguished myself. Beneath a low hill a soldier is hacking at the frozen ground by himself. And the one leading us says:

"Here you are, Yegorov, I've brought some

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men to help. Now we can finish it quickly. Keep hacking at the ground. We'll all help you in a moment."

A little way away are the bodies of the dead men. They are sprinkled with powdery snow. White greatcoats and white faces. Seven white men lie in silence. How could it be a dream? They're dead. Our countrymen. And we were drinking wine.

"Our commander's a good man," I say to Sashka. "He drank himself and let us drink, too."

"Shut up," says Sashka.

"Get hold of your spades," says Karpov.

"That should include everyone," I say with a snigger.

Sashka and Fedoseyev look at me.

"I'm going to dig too," says Karpov quietly. "Here's my spade."

And the seven dead lie motionless as though the matter was no concern of theirs. We dig in silence. An hour or two. The ground isn't easy to dig, but we manage. We'll be putting the men in the grave any moment now. Will I be able to look at them?

"Turn out the torch," says Karpov.

Yegorov puts out the torch. But it doesn't make any difference. It hardly gave out any light, anyway. So why did Karpov go and make him turn it off.

The grave is quite deep. The first soldier climbs down into it.

"Right, Yegorov," he says, and I know what that means. Yegorov makes a sign and we follow him. Do we really have to pick up the dead men in our arms and carry them across to the grave? Sashka and Yegorov take hold of the first one. They begin to carry him. Fedoseyev bends down towards the second, Karpov looks at me. Why should I pick him up? I'll pick him up by the feet. It's not his head, after all. I must do it. Yes, me. Not Karpov, but me. I pick up the man by his feet. We carry him.

"Careful," says the first soldier from the grave, "don't drop them."

"Certainly not Lenya," says Yegorov, passing us.

"This is our Lenya," says the first soldier. "Put him over here."

He takes Lenya's body and carefully lays it down.

Then we bring over another one, and then another.

"Put Saltykov on top. He was a young fellow," says the first soldier. "It'll be easier for him to lie like that."

"Can't you keep quiet?" says Karpov.

"They wouldn't have minded me saying that, Comrade Lieutenant," says the soldier, "but I can keep quiet if you want."

We lay them all in the grave. Neatly. They lie there in their greatcoats. They lie there in their boots. They all have new boots. We work away with our spades in silence. We do everything we should. Everything. And now their boots are hidden under a layer of earth. And a steel helmet is lying on top of the mound. Whose it is I don't know.

We drive off in the same direction. Towards the firing. We don't speak.

Open Score

WHO HAS BEEN counting how many times we've changed our position? Who has? And how many mortar shells have I passed to Sashka Zolotarev, who drops them down the muzzle. How my hands ache. It's not that we only change our position, just to change once would be fine. We keep going forward. Mozdok is somewhere behind us. Come on! Come on! Now I'll certainly get a spoon. I shall have a nice, new spoon. And then as soon as the fighting is over, the sergeant-major will issue me knee-boots. That's to say, when it's over, but when will it be over? Nick Grinchenko keeps bending down. He crouches down looking through the sights, then stands up straight again. He's quite a tall fellow.

"Platoo-oon!" shouts Karpov. He's waving a branch. He stands there looking so pale. "Fire!"

Sashka has flung off his greatcoat. The padded jacket has come open. His lips are white. All he does is sling the shells into the barrel of the mortar. Just that. And each time he gives a grunt. And the mortar also grunts.

Through the shouting you can hear the mortars begin snorting in the German positions. And the terrifying shells they fire can be heard bursting somewhere behind our battery.

"I hope they don't get any more accurate," says Shongin. He actually shouts it, but you can hardly hear him. "If they do, we're finished."

"Retreat!" shouts Karpov.

"Thank God!" laughs Sashka plaintively. "My hands are falling off. Nothing to put in their place."

The lorries come out of their shelter. We hitch on the mortars. Then again we hear the grunt-

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ing of the German mortars, the whistle of the shells overhead and the screech behind us. That one missed. So did that one. How disgusting your own helplessness can be. Am I a rabbit or something? Do I just have to wait until they finish me off? Why is it that nothing depends on me? I stand by myself on a flat piece of ground, and suddenly they get you. It's better in the infantry. Better in the infantry. At least you go into the attack yelling. And then it's man to man; and you're not scared, because it's the enemy. But here they fire at you and you cross yourself and wonder whether the next one's got your name on it. There it is again. The German mortars are grunting more and more persistently, more and more relentlessly. The shells are coming fast and thick. Our lorries screech like mad as they race out of the line of fire. Hurry up, damn it!

And there's the grunting again. It sounds so peaceful. Again and again. And the whistle.

"Get down!"

Back there Shongin is turning round and round.

"What do you think you're doing, gathering mushrooms?" shouts Karpov.

"My puttee. . . ."

And he turns round and round like a kitten with a ball of wool.

Something hits me in the side. Is it the end? I hear people running. They're coming to me. No, past me. I'm still alive. Heavens. I'm still alive. I'm alive and alive. There's earth in my mouth, but I'm still alive. It wasn't me they killed.

They all run past me. I get up. I'm unhurt. God! Nothing broken. Shongin is lying a short way away. And Sashka is standing over him. He's holding his chin in his hand and the hand is trembling. It's not Shongin lying there, it's the remains of his greatcoat. But where's Shongin then? I don't understand at all. There's his mess-tin, his machine-gun . . . his spoon! . . . I'd better not look. I'd better not look.

"Direct hit," says someone.

Nick takes me by the shoulder. Leads me away. And I go with him.

"Spit out the earth," he says. "Or you'll choke. We go across to the lorries. They are already moving off. Several people remain beside Shongin.

"Come on, come on," says Nick as he sits me down.

"Everyone all right?" asks Karpov.

"All the rest are," says Nick.

Towards evening we arrive at a village. And we stop. Is it all over? Are we really going to sleep? Here comes the field kitchen. I've an empty feeling in my stomach, but I'm not hungry.

The three of us sit on a log. I sip my soup straight from the mess-tin.

"The Germans are putting up a fight," says Sashka.

"It's all over now," says Nick.

"Our boys have started flying in the daytime now," I say.

"How's your head, is it still there?" asks Nick.

"He has a head like a mess-tin. It can stand anything," says Sashka. He gives a laugh. Quietly. To himself.

"I'm sorry about Shongin," I say.

We finish up our soup in silence.

"It's easier for you without a spoon," says Nick. "A couple of mouthfuls and the soup's finished. But in our case half of it is spilled by the time you scoop it up and put it in your mouth."

"I saw some German spoons here," says Sashka. "Lying about. I should have brought you some."

And he gets up and goes off to look for the spoons. So I'll have a spoon. A German one, it's true. But what's the difference. I've gone so long without one! So now I'll have a spoon at last!

The spoons are really good ones. Aluminium. A whole bunch of them.

"They've been washed. The Germans like cleanliness. Take any one you like."

The spoons are in my hand.

"They've been washed," says Sashka.

A lot of spoons. Take any one you like. After meals you have to lick it clean and stuff it deep down in your pocket. But it's also been licked by a German. He probably had thick, moist lips. And while he was licking it, his eyes bulged. . . .

"They've been washed," says Sashka.

And then he sticks it in the top of his boot. His leggings inside are soaked with sweat. Then he dips it in the porridge again, and licks it once more. . . . One spoon has a speck of dried food sticking to it.

"What's the matter with you?" says Nick.

I give the spoons back to Zolotarev. I can't possibly eat with them. I don't know why.

We sit and smoke.

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"That Heinkel is having a fine old time," says Nick, and looks up in the air.

A German reconnaissance plane is cruising past overhead. Our gunners are taking pot-shots at it. But it's too high. And it's already getting dark. It fires in our direction from time to time. You can just hear the rat-tat-tat.

"He's rattled!" says Nick. "I bet that very same Fascist was walking up and down this street only yesterday."

And Sashka hurls away the spoons one by one. Draws back his arm and lets fly. Suddenly one of the spoons hits me in the leg. How that happened I can't imagine.

"Ouch, that hurt," I say, "what are you throwing spoons about for?"

"I'm not aiming at you," says Sashka.

But my leg hurts more and more. I try to stand up but my left leg won't straighten.

"What's up?" says Nick.

"I can't straighten my leg for some reason," I say. "It hurts like hell."

He examines the leg.

"Take down your trousers a moment," he orders.

For God's sake! What for? I'm not wounded, not even scratched.... But I feel horribly scared. I have a strange sick feeling, inside, somewhere near my heart.

"Take your trousers down, you bastard!"

I let down my padded trousers. My left hip is a mass of blood. There's a small black hole in the leg of my white underpants; the blood is coming from there... blood.... But the pain has eased... it's just that I feel dizzy. And slightly sick.

"The spoon couldn't have done that, could it?" says Sashka in alarm. "What can have happened?"

"It was the Heinkel," says Nick. "You're lucky you didn't catch it in the head."

I've been wounded! How could that have happened? No fighting, nothing. In the still of the evening. I didn't rush an enemy observation point. I wasn't in a bayonet charge. Nick goes off somewhere, comes back, goes off again. The leg won't go straight.

"It nicked the vein," says Sashka.

"Why doesn't someone come to help me," I say. "I shall bleed to death."

"Don't worry, you've got plenty of blood left. Lean against this. Lie down a while."

Here comes Nick. He brings a medical orderly. He gives me an injection.

"That's so you won't get tetanus," he says.

He bandages me up. They lay me on someone's greatcoat. Someone comes and goes. Nothing is interesting any more. I lie there for a long time. I don't feel the cold. I hear Nick shouting:

"The man will freeze! He ought to be sent to the dressing station, but that damn sergeant-major won't give us a truck."

Who's he talking to? Aha, the battery commander is coming over to me. He says nothing. He looks at me. Should I ask him to let me have some boots? Anyway, what use would they be at this moment? The one-and-a-half-tonner is driving up. It's carrying empty steel petrol drums.

"We'll have to put him between the drums," I hear the battery commander say.

Who cares where they put me.

Someone stuffs some papers in my pocket. I can't make out who it is. Who cares, anyway?

"They're your papers," says Sashka. "Hand them over at the dressing station."

They put me in the back of the truck. The empty drums stand round me like sentries.

"Good-bye," says Nick. "It's not very far."

"Good-bye, Nick."

"Good-bye," says Sashka Zolotarev. "See you soon."

"Good-bye," I say, "of course, you will."

And the lorry drives off. That's all. I sleep while we drive along the road by which we moved north. I feel warm and snug. The drums are all round me.

I wake up for a few minutes when they carry me into the dressing station hut. They put me down on the floor. And I fall asleep again.

... It's a large, fine room. With panes in the windows. And warm. There's a stove. Someone keeps pulling at me. It's a nurse in a white overall over her padded jackets.

"Let's have your papers, dear," she says. "You have to be checked in for the hospital train. They're sending you to the rear!"

I take the papers out of my pocket, and out comes a spoon as well. A spoon?

"Don't lose your spoon," says the nurse.

A spoon? Where did it come from? I hold it up to my eyes. An old worn aluminium spoon, with the name Shongin scratched on the handle. When could I have got hold of it? Shongin.... Shongin.... Something to remember you by. Nothing is left except the spoon. Only the spoon. Think of the wars he went through, but this was his last. There always has to be a last

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one. And his wife doesn't know about it. Only I know. I'll hide away the spoon. I'll always have it with me. I'm sorry, Shongin, old soldier.

The nurse gives me back my papers.

"Go to sleep," she says. "Why are your lips trembling? You don't need to be scared now."

I'm not scared now. What does now mean? Now I don't want anything at all. Not even the boots. Now I'm completely alone. Suppose Nick suddenly came in and said, "We're going into the attack. Now we'll have some fun, mates. Now we'll have a swig of brandy from time to time." Or if Sashka Zolotarev came in and said, "My hands are just dropping off and I haven't got another pair." Or if Shongin said, "You talk too much. You're all bastards!" But Shongin won't say anything any more. Nothing. A hell of a soldier *I* am! I haven't even fired my machine-gun. I haven't even seen one live German. A hell of a soldier I am! I haven't got a single medal.... But there are other soldiers lying beside me. I hear groaning. They're real soldiers. They been through everything. They've seen everything.

Some new casualties are brought into the hut. One is put down next to me. He looks at me. The bandage has slipped off his forehead. He pushes it back into place. He swears.

"Be with you in a moment, dear," says the nurse.

"I'm sick enough without you," he says to her. And he looks at me. He has big, vicious eyes.

"You from the mortar battery?" he asks.

"Yes," I say. "Do I know you? Do you know our men?"

"Yes, I know them," he says. "I know them all."

"When did you get it?"

"This morning. Just now. When did you think?"

"What about Nick Grinchenko?"

"Yes, and your Nick."

"And Sashka, too?"

"Yes, and Sashka. The lot of them. Wiped clean out. I'm the only one left."

"And the battery commander?"

He begins shouting at me:

"I told you, the lot of them! The lot of them!"

And I shout back:

"You're lying. It's all lies!"

"He doesn't know what he's talking about," says someone. "Can't you see his eyes?"

"Don't listen to him," says the nurse. "He's not in his right mind."

"He talks too much," I say. "Our boys are advancing."

And I want to cry. Not because of what he said. But because you can cry for other reasons than grief. Cry on, cry on.... Your wound isn't that bad, schoolboy. You've a long way to go. You'll still be around for a while."

[*Translated by* JOHN RICHARDSON]

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Four poems by Evgeni Evtushenko

A Knock on the Door

"Who's there?"
"I am old age,
I've come to you."
"Later!
I'm busy now.
Got things to do!"
"All right, my lad,
but bear in mind
I'm waiting for you behind this door."
I wrote.
Telephoned.
Swallowed a fried egg.
Then I opened the door,
but no one there.
Maybe friends
were pulling my leg?
Or perhaps
I hadn't got the name right.
It was not old age had called,
but maturity.
It couldn't wait,
and sighing
departed.

translated by George Reavey

Through the Crowded Streets

Through the crowded streets of the capital
I wander above the stir of April waters,
revoltingly illogical,
unforgivably young.
I take tramcars by storm,
tell someone crazy lies,
and run in my own footsteps,
though I can never catch up.
I'm astounded by the bulging barges,
airplanes,
my own verse . . .
They have endowed me with riches,
but didn't tell me what to do with them.

translated by George Reavey

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Humour

Kings,
Emperors, and Czars,
sovereigns of all the earth,
have commanded many a parade,
but they could not command
humour.
Aesop, the tramp, came visiting
the palaces of illustrious men
sunk in sleek comfort all day,
thought them no better than beggars.
In houses,
where hypocrites have
left their footsteps,
there Hodja Nasr-ed-Din,
with his jokes,
upset
mean minds
like a row of pawns!
They tried
to commission
humour—
but humour cannot be bought!
They tried
to murder humour,
but humour
thumbed
his nose at them!
It's hard
to fight humour.
They executed him time and again.
His severed head
swayed on the point of a pike.
But as soon as the mummers' pipes
began their jesting tale,
humour defiantly cried:
"I'm back, I'm here!"
and started to foot a dance.
In an overcoat, threadbare and old,
with downcast face
and a mask of repentance,
a political criminal,
he,
now under arrest,
trudged to his execution.
He appeared to show resignation
as if accepting the life-beyond,
but of a sudden
he slipped out
of his overcoat,
and, waving his hand,
did a bolt.

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Humour
was shoved
into cells,
but much good that did.
Humour went straight through
prison bars and walls of stone.
Coughing, like any man in the ranks,
he marched
singing a ditty,
rifle in hand upon the Winter Palace.
He's accustomed to frowns,
but they do him no harm;
and at times, with humour,
humour
looks at himself.
He's eternal.
Nimble and quick.
He'll pass through anything,
through everyone.
So—
glory be to humour.
He—
is a brave man.

translated by George Reavey

Secrets

Adolescent secrets slip away
like mist along the beach . . .
Tonyas, Tanyas—that's what they
were even with their chapped red feet.

So were the stars and animals
and flocks of mushrooms under the aspens,
and all the doors swung secretly—
only the way they do for children.

Then the riddles of the world arose
like little white balls from the mouth
of a fakir in a bewitching pose,
bewitching us to make things out.

Little magic snowflakes tumbled
down on the woods and fields of hay.
Little magic laughter rippled
in the corners of the young girls' eyes.

We whispered something secretly
on the secretive ice of the skating-rink,
and like two secrets, timidly,
we two touched our finger-tips.

But suddenly we were all grown-up.
His tailcoat tattered and worn threadbare,
the fakir vanished into somebody's childhood,
like a distant province, to go on tour.

We, being grown-up, were forgotten.
Ah, fakir, you're a no-good man.
The snow now falls down on our shoulders
so obviously it seems a wrong.

Where are you now, little magic balls?
There's nothing secret about our sorrow.
There's nobody secret for us now,
and we have no secrets from the others.

And so, if by chance a hand now touches
yours gently, softly caresses your hand,
it's only a hand—not a secret,
you know this—only a hand!

Give me a secret, a simple secret,
a secret: shyness, silence, things done—
a slim, a skinny, a barefooted secret . . .
Give me a secret—if only one!

translated by F. D. Reeve

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Burroughs' "Naked Lunch"

By Mary McCarthy

LAST SUMMER at the International Writers' Conference in Edinburgh, I said I thought the national novel, like the nation-state, was dying and that a new kind of novel, based on statelessness, was beginning to be written. This novel had a high, aerial point of view and a plot of perpetual motion. Two experiences, that of exile and that of jet-propelled mass tourism, provided the subject matter for a new kind of story. There is no novel, yet, that I know of, about mass tourism, but somebody will certainly write it. Of the novel based on statelessness, I gave as examples William Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* and *Lolita*. Burroughs, I explained, is not literally a political exile, but the drug addicts he describes are continually on the move, and life in the United States, with its present narcotics laws, is untenable for the addict if he does not want to spend it in jail (in the same way, the confirmed homosexual is a chronic refugee, ordered to move on by the Venetian police, the Capri police, the mayor of Provincetown, the mayor of Nantucket). Had I read it at the time, I might have added Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum* to the list: here the point of view, instead of being high, is very low—that of a dwarf; the hero and narrator is a displaced person, born in the Free City of Danzig, of a Polish mother (who is not really a Pole but a member of a minority within Poland) and an uncertain father, who may be a German grocer or a Polish postal employee. In any case, I said that in thinking over the novels of the last few years, I was struck by the fact that the only ones that had not simply given me pleasure but interested me had been those of Burroughs and Nabokov. The others, even when well done (Compton-Burnett), seemed almost regional.

This statement, to judge by the British press, was a shot fired round the world. I still hear its reverberations in Paris and read about them in the American press. I am quoted as saying that *The Naked Lunch* is the most important novel of the age, of the epoch, of the century. The only truthful report of what I said about Burroughs was given by Stephen Spender in ENCOUNTER, Oct. 1962. But nobody seems to have paid attention to Spender any more than anyone paid attention to what I said on the spot. When I chided one reporter, Malcolm Muggeridge, in person with having terribly misquoted me in the *New Statesman*, he appeared to think that there was not much difference between saying that a book was one of two or three that had interested you in the last few years and saying that it was one of the "outstanding novels of the age." According to me, the age is still Proust, Joyce, Kafka, Lawrence, Faulkner, to mention only the "big names," but to others evidently the age is shrinking to the length of a publishing season, just as a literary speaker is turned into a publisher's tout. The result, of course, is a disparagement of Burroughs, because if *The Naked Lunch* is proclaimed as the masterpiece of the century, then it is easily found wanting. Indeed, I wonder whether the inflation of my remarks was not at bottom malicious; it is not usually those who admire Burroughs who come up to me at parties to announce: "I *read* what you said at Edinburgh." This is true, I think, of all such publicity; it is malicious in effect whatever the intention and permits the reader to dismiss works of art and public figures as "not what they are cracked up to be." A similar thing happened with *Dr. Zhivago*, a wonderful book, which attracted much hatred and venom because it was not Tolstoy. Very few critics said it was Tolstoyan, but the impression got around that they had. Actually, as I recall, the critics who mentioned Tolstoy in connection with Pasternak were those bent on destroying Pasternak's book.

As for me, I was left in an uncomfortable situation. I did not want to write in to the editors of British newspapers and magazines, denying that I had said whatever incontinent thing they had quoted me as saying. This would have been ungracious to Burroughs, who was the innocent party in the affair and who must have felt more and more like the groom in a shotgun literary wedding, seeing my name yoked with his as it were indissolubly. And

* *The Naked Lunch*. By WILLIAM BURROUGHS. Olympia Press, Paris and Grove Press, N.Y. 1962.

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the monstrousness of the union, doubtless, was what kept the story hot. In the end, it became clear to me that the only way I could put an end to this embarrassment was by writing at length what I thought about *The Naked Lunch*—something I was reluctant to do because I am busy finishing a book of my own and reluctant, also, because the whole thing had assumed the proportions of a *cause célèbre* and I felt like a witness called to the stand and obliged to tell the truth and nothing but the truth under oath. This is not a normal critical position. Of course the critic normally tries to be truthful, but he does not feel that his review is some sort of pay-off or eternal reckoning, that the eye of God or the world press is staring into his heart as he writes. Now that I have written the present review, I am glad, as always happens, to have made a clean breast of it. This is what I think about Burroughs.

"YOU CAN CUT into *The Naked Lunch* at any intersection point," says Burroughs, suiting the action to the word, in "an atrophied preface" he appends as a tail-piece. His book, he means, is like a neighbourhood movie with continuous showings that you can drop into whenever you please—you don't have to wait for the beginning of the feature picture. Or like a worm that you can chop up into sections each of which wriggles off as an independent worm. Or a nine-lived cat. Or a cancer. He is fond of the word "mosaic," especially in its scientific sense of a plant-mottling caused by a virus, and his Muse (see etymology of "mosaic") is interested in organic processes of multiplication and duplication. The literary notion of time as simultaneous, a montage, is not original with Burroughs; what is original is the scientific bent he gives it and a view of the world that combines biochemistry, anthropology, and politics. It is as though *Finnegans Wake* were cut loose from history and adapted for a cinerama circus titled "One World." *The Naked Lunch* has no use for history, which is all "ancient history"—sloughed-off skin; from its planetary perspective, there are only geography and customs. Seen in terms of space, history shrivels into a mere wrinkling or furrowing of the surface as in an aerial relief-map or one of those pieced-together aerial photographs known in the trade as mosaics. The oldest memory in *The Naked Lunch* is of jacking-off in boyhood latrines, a memory recaptured through pederasty. This must be the first space novel, the first serious piece of science fiction—the others are entertainment.

The action of *The Naked Lunch* takes place in the consciousness of One Man, William Lee, who is taking a drug cure. The principal

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characters, besides Lee, are his friend, Bill Gains (who seems momentarily to turn into a woman called Jane); various members of the Narcotic Squad, especially one Bradley the Buyer; Dr. Benway, a charlatan medico who is treating Lee; two vaudevillians, Clem and Jody; A.J., a carnival con man, the last of the Big Spenders; a sailor; an Arab called Ahmed; an archetypal Southern druggist, Doc Parker ("a man don't have no secrets from God and his druggist"); and various boys with whining voices. Among the minor characters are a number of automobiles, each with its specific complaint, like the oil-burning Ford V-8; a film executive; the Party Leader; the Vigilante; John and Mary, the sex acrobats; and a puzzled American housewife who is heard complaining because the Mixmaster keeps trying to climb up under her dress. The scene shifts about, shiftily, from New York to Chicago to St. Louis to New Orleans to Mexico to Malmö, Tangier, Venice, and the human identities shift about shiftily too, for all these modern places and modern individuals (if that is the right word) have interchangeable parts. Burroughs is fond too of the word "ectoplasm," and the beings that surround Lee, particularly the inimical ones, seem ectoplasmic phantoms projected on the wide screen of his consciousness from a mass seance. But the haunting is less visual than auditory. These "characters," in the colloquial sense, are ventriloquial voices produced, as it were, against the will of the ventriloquist, who has become their dummy. Passages of dialogue and description keep recurring in different contexts with slight variations, as though they possessed ubiquity.

THE BEST COMPARISON for the book, with its aerial sex acts performed on a high trapeze, its con men and barkers, its arena-like form, is in fact to a circus. A circus travels but it is always the same, and this is Burroughs' sardonic image of modern life. The Barnum of the show is the mass-manipulator, who appears in a series of disguises. *Control*, as Burroughs says, underlining it, *can never be a means to anything but more control—like drugs*, and the vicious circle of addiction is re-enacted, worldwide, with sideshows in the political and "social" sphere—the "social" here has vanished, except in quotation marks, like the historical, for everything has become automatised. Everyone is an addict of one kind or another, as people indeed are wont to say of themselves, complacently: "I'm a crossword puzzle addict, a Hi-Fi addict," etcetera. The South is addicted to lynching and nigger-hating, and the Southern folk-custom of burning a Negro recurs throughout the book as a sort of Fourth-of-July carnival with fireworks. Circuses, with their cages of wild animals, are also dangerous, like Burroughs' human circus; an accident may occur, as when the electronic brain in Dr. Benway's laboratory goes on the rampage, and the freaks escape to mingle with the controlled citizens of Freeland in a general riot, or in the scene where the hogs are let loose in the gourmet restaurant.

On a level usually thought to be "harmless," addiction to platitudes and commonplaces is global. To Burroughs' ear, the Bore, lurking in the hotel lobby, is literally deadly (" 'You look to me like a man of intelligence.' Always ominous opening words, my boy!"). The same for Doc Parker with his captive customer in the back room of his pharmacy ("... so long as you got a legitimate condition and an Rx from a certified bona feedy M.D., I'm honored to serve you"), the professor in the classroom ("Hehe hehe he"), the attorney in court ("Hehe hehe he," likewise). The complacent sound of snickering laughter is an alarm signal, like the suave bell-tones of the psychiatrist and the emphatic drone of the Party Leader ("You see men and women. *Ordinary* men and women going about their ordinary everyday tasks. Leading their ordinary lives. That's what we need...").

Cut to ordinary men and women, going about their ordinary everyday tasks. The whine of the put-upon boy hustler: "All kinda awful sex acts." "Why cancha just get physical like a human?" "So I guess he come to some kinda awful climax." "You think I am innarested to hear about your horrible old condition? I am not innarested at all." "But he comes to a climax and turns into some kinda awful crab." This aggrieved tone merges with the malingering sighs of the American housewife, opening a box of Lux: "I got the most awful cold, and my intestines is all constipated." And the clarion of the Salesmen: "When the Priority numbers are called up yonder I'll be there." These average folks are addicts of the science page of the Sunday supplements; they like to talk about their diseases and about vile practices that paralyse the practitioner from the waist down or about a worm that gets into your kidney and grows to enormous size or about the "horrible" result of marijuana addiction—it makes you turn black and your legs drop off. The superstitious scientific vocabulary is diffused from the laboratory and the mental hospital into the general population. Overheard at a lynching: "Don't crowd too close, boys. His intestines is subject to explode in the fire". The same diffusion of culture takes place with modern physics. A lieutenant to his general: "But chief, can't we get them started and they imitate each other like a chained reaction?"

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The phenomenon of repetition, of course, gives rise to boredom; many readers complain that they cannot get through *The Naked Lunch*. And/or that they find it disgusting. It *is* disgusting and sometimes tiresome, often in the same places. The prominence of the anus, of faeces, and of all sorts of "horrible" discharges, as the characters would say, from the body's orifices, becomes too much of a bad thing, like the sado-masochistic sex performances—the auto-ejaculation of a hanged man is not everybody's cantharides. A reader whose erogenous zones are more temperate than the author's begins to feel either that he is a square (a guilty sentiment he should not yield to) or that he is the captive of an addict.

IN DEFENCE, Swift could be cited, and indeed between Burroughs and Swift there are many points of comparison; not only the obsession with excrement and the horror of female genitalia but a disgust with politics and the whole body politic. Like Swift, Burroughs has irritable nerves and something of the crafty temperament of the inventor. There is a great deal of Laputa in the countries Burroughs calls Interzone and Freeland, and Swift's solution for the Irish problem would appeal to the American's dry logic. As Gulliver, Swift posed as an anthropologist (though the study was not known by that name then) among savage people; Burroughs parodies the anthropologist in his descriptions of the American heartland: "... the Interior a vast subdivision, antennae of television to the meaningless sky.... Illinois and Missouri, miasma of mound-building peoples, grovelling worship of the Food Source, cruel and ugly festivals." The style here is more emotive than Swift's, but in his deadpan explanatory notes ("This is a rural English custom designed to eliminate aged and bedfast dependents"), there is a Swiftian laconic factuality. The "factual" appearance of the whole narrative, with its battery of notes and citations, some straight, some loaded, its extracts from a diary, like a ship's log, its pharmacopeia, has the flavour of eighteenth-century satire. He calls himself a "Factualist" and belongs, all alone, to an Age of Reason, which he locates in the future. In him, as in Swift, there is a kind of soured utopianism.

Yet what saves *The Naked Lunch* is not a literary ancestor but humour. Burroughs' humour is peculiarly American, at once broad and sly. It is the humour of a comedian, a vaudeville performer playing in "One," in front of the asbestos curtain of some Keith Circuit or Pantages house long since converted to movies. The same jokes reappear, slightly refurbished, to suit the circumstances, the way a vaudeville artist used to change Yonkers to Renton when he was playing Seattle. For example, the Saniflush joke, which is always good for a laugh: somebody is cutting the cocaine/the morphine/the penicillin with Saniflush. Some of the jokes are verbal ("Stop me if you've heard this atomic secret" or Dr. Benway's "A simopath... is a citizen convinced he is an ape or other simian. It is a disorder peculiar to the army and discharge cures it"). Some are mimic buffoonery (Dr. Benway, in his last appearance, dreamily, his voice fading out: "Cancer, my first love"). Some are whole vaudeville "numbers," as when the hoofers, Clem and Jody, are hired by the Russians to give Americans a bad name abroad: they appear in Liberia wearing black Stetsons and red galluses and talking loudly about burning niggers back home. A skit like this may rise to a frenzy, as if in a Marx Brothers or a Clayton, Jackson, and Durante act, when all the actors pitch in. *E.g.*, the very funny scene in Chez Robert, "where a huge icy gourmet broods over the greatest cuisine in the world": A. J. appears, the last of the Big Spenders, and orders a bottle of ketchup; immediate pandemonium; A.J. gives his hog-call, and the shocked gourmet diners are all devoured by famished hogs. The effect of pandemonium, all hell breaking loose, is one of Burroughs' favourites and an equivalent of the old vaudeville finale, with the acrobats, the jugglers, the magician, the hoofers, the lady-who-was-cut-in-half, the piano-player, the comedians, all pushing into the act.

ANOTHER FAVOURITE EFFECT, with Burroughs, is the metamorphosis. A citizen is turned into animal form, a crab or a huge centipede, or into some unspeakable monstrosity, like Bradley the Narcotics Agent who turns into an unidentifiable carnivore. These metamorphoses, of course, are punishments. The Hellzapoppin effect of orgies and riots and the metamorphosis effect, rapid or creeping, are really cancerous onslaughts—matter on the rampage multiplying itself and "building" as a revue scene "builds" to a climax. Growth and deterioration are the same thing: a human being "deteriorates" or grows into a one-man jungle. What you think of it depends on your point of view; from the junky's angle, Bradley is better as a carnivore eating the Narcotics Commissioner than he was as "fuzz"—junky slang for the police.

The impression left by this is perplexing. On the one hand, control is evil; on the other, escape from control is mass slaughter or reduction to a state of proliferating cellular matter. The police are the enemy, but as Burroughs shrewdly observes in one passage: "A *functioning* police state needs no police." The policeman is internalised in the citizen. You might

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by IVAN VALERIY (TARSIS)

On publication the critics wrote:

"A brilliant Russian satirist."
OLIVIA MANNING, SUNDAY TIMES

"Enough to make all those who think they can kill the human spirit give up in despair." EDWARD CRANKSHAW, OBSERVER

"Valeriy is not a traitor to his country. His patriotism is strong." GLASGOW HERALD

The author pays the penalty

We published *The Bluebottle* under a pseudonym hoping to conceal the author's identity. Now comes the news that the Russians have put him behind the bars of a lunatic asylum—more convenient than a prison as this dispenses with a trial. He is now revealed to be Valeriy Tarsis, 60-year-old member of the Soviet Writer's Union. Ironically, he predicted this very fate in the book itself.

Later this year we shall publish another novel by Tarsis, smuggled out at the same time as *The Bluebottle*. It is tentatively called *The Gay Life*.

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say that it would have been better to have no control, no police, in the first place; then there would be no police states, functioning or otherwise. This would seem to be Burroughs' position, but it is not consistent with his picture of sex. The libertarian position usually has as one of its axioms a love of Nature and the natural, that is, of the life-principle itself, commonly identified with sex. But there is little overt love of the life-principle in *The Naked Lunch*, and sex, while magnified—a common trait of homosexual literature—is a kind of mechanical man-trap baited with fresh meat. The sexual climax, the jet of sperm, accompanied by a whistling scream, is often a death spasm, and the "perfect" orgasm would seem to be the posthumous orgasm of the hanged man, shooting his jissom into pure space.

It is true that Nature and sex are two-faced, and that growth is death-oriented. But if Nature is not seen as far more good than evil, then a need for control is posited. And, strangely, this seems to be Burroughs' position too. *The human virus can now be treated*, he says with emphasis, meaning the species itself. By scientific methods, he implies. Yet the laboratory of *The Naked Lunch* is a musical-comedy inferno, and Dr. Benway's assistant is a female chimpanzee. It is impossible, as Burroughs knows, to have scientific experiment without control. Then what? Self-control? Do-it-yourself? But self-control, again, is an internalised system of authority, a subjection of the impulses to the will, the least "natural" part of the personality. Such a system might suit Marcus Aurelius, but it hardly seems congenial to the author of *The Naked Lunch*. And even if it were (for the author is at once puritan and tolerant), it would not form the basis for scientific experiment on the "human virus." Only for scientific experiment on oneself.

POSSIBLY THIS IS WHAT Burroughs means; in fact his present literary exercises may be stages in such a deliberate experiment. The questions just posed would not arise if *The Naked Lunch* did not contain messages that unluckily are somewhat arcane. Not just messages; prescriptions. That—to answer a pained question that keeps coming up like a refrain—is why the book is taken seriously. Burroughs' remarkable talent is only part of the reason; the other part is that, finally, for the first time in recent years, a talented writer means what he says to be taken and used literally, like an Rx prescription. The literalness of Burroughs is the opposite of "literature." Unsentimental and factual, he writes as though his thoughts had the quality of self-evidence. In short, he has a crankish courage, but all courage nowadays is probably crankish.

After Kafka

The Copper Cow. By TOM CHETWYND. *Anthony Blond*, 18s.

The Marquise of O—. By HEINRICH VON KLEIST. Translated by MARTIN GREENBERG. *Faber & Faber*, 21s.

The Director's Wife and Other Stories. By BRIAN GLANVILLE. *Secker & Warburg*, 18s.

A Case of Libel. By JOHN BINGHAM. *Gollancz*, 16s.

The Seed and the Sower. By LAURENS VAN DER POST. *Hogarth*, 18s.

I HAD THOUGHT that Kafka had got out of the English fictional system round about the late 'thirties: and hoped that he had. For, like many great writers and personalities, he combined a vision which is highly personal as well as authentic, with other qualities which can be reduced to a trick or a mannerism. The influence is almost bound to be generally bad, because the trick can be copied while the vision is inimitable. I may be doing Mr. Chetwynd an injustice: he may not be "after" Kafka but only after the general Spirit of Allegory. Somebody once said, with insight, that "Allegory is the method of second-rate minds." I suspect that pure or one-to-one Allegory, the sort to which there is a perfectly-fitting key, is not only a bore, but always has been. It is too naïve for a mature imagination: and a writer like Kafka who had indeed a mature imagination and a profound psychological insight, was really using a much more complex, a much more poetic method, a method nearer to metaphor than to either simile or symbol. An interesting result was a gain in realism: for his characters are generally not types or figments, but genuine multi-dimensional individuals.

Mr. Chetwynd's publishers are not forthcoming about either Mr. Chetwynd himself or his provenance—except for a large crew-cut photograph, which shows him as young. They say that his book is "the savage and poetic Erewhon of an accountant." I must say that Butler's Musical Banks are more arresting and enlivening. *The Copper Cow* is about Money both as an institution and as the evil spirit of Mammon. The chief character comes to join an Institute devoted to the study and glorification of this substance in all its aspects. The students wear a uniform of copper armour: this could of course express and account for the fact that the young man's personal contacts are unreal and unsatisfactory. I see that Mr. Chetwynd has talent: but it emerges when he is describing something he has experienced with his senses—for instance, in describing the real "unreality"

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of a party. What he is suffering from is quite simply allegorisation: his method is neither poetic nor novelistic: it is *dream*, with the illimitable, even malignant quality of dreaming. Analysand's dreaming, at that: anything may turn up in it, suddenly promoted to a tremendous and foregone symbolic significance. The chief character is obliged, by an instructor whose writing on the blackboard he cannot read, to visit an oculist. A perfectly ordinary interview (except that the oculist is a woman, a common fact that Mr. Chetwynd seems to find extraordinary) results in a prescription for steel-rimmed spectacles. If this doesn't mean something too obvious to bother to disguise, I can't think what it does mean. All as blind as the next man, see? There is no compelling structural reason why he shouldn't work in his dentist too. A crack at the Health Service?

It looks as if Kafka is coming up rapidly again in the cultural lift. *The Marquise of O—* is the complete collection of Heinrich von Kleist's stories. Like me, Goethe, who was Kleist's contemporary, could not stand him. The collection has a preface by Thomas Mann, and an Introduction by Martin Greenberg who is also the translator and has done a difficult job well. Kafka, Mr. Greenberg tells us, used to read "Michael Kohlhaus," the longest of these stories, aloud to his friends. Mr. Greenberg finds in this story—with some reason if also with some exaggeration—that Kleist was the presumptive sire of the apparently parthogenetic Kafka. Kohlhaus was a horse-dealer, a contemporary of Luther, in the Germany of the Electorates, when there was a rather fluid notion of legality. He has some valuable horses rustled by a Junker, a kind of Border Baron. Kohlhaus is "an upright and terrible man," and after prolonged failure to obtain his rights, he starts a private revolution. The influence on Kafka is indeed visible in the rather mysterious pile-up of frustration which this story describes. But I feel that more social and intellectual significance has been read into this presage than is warranted. Mr. Greenberg quotes Georg Lukacs on the despairing isolation of Kleist's characters: and from Thomas Mann we are given the notion that Kleist might have picked up his solipsism from Kant. (I find it staggering that Kant could upset *any* writer with warmth of imagination.) Anyway, I am sure that there is something in all of this, but not much: and I fear that we may now be in for a spate of thesis-hunting about Kleist. Mann informs us that the stories fill us "with anxiety and terror... all our *affects* are confounded." Our *senses* possibly: personally I find them frenzied, as if far too

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NICCOLO TUCCI'S Before My Time
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JONATHAN CAPE

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many characters were all shouting their heads off at once. I feel that Kleist uses this deafening frenzy as a device to make your flesh creep. The result is frigidity not chill. The "Horror" is all very Gothick.

Mr. Brian Glanville's collection of stories, *The Director's Wife*, makes convincing and enjoyable reading about a world of footballers with some of their women: especially for someone like myself who would otherwise have hardly given this world a thought. It is at least an even chance that the convincing quality is almost entirely due to Mr. Glanville's cunning. I prefer the stories in *oratio recta*, but some of them are too anecdotal, too closely geared to the Sporting Page. There is always the chance, especially nowadays, that a writer may give more weight than it deserves to the knowledge he has acquired in his wage-earning job. What is the point about footballers as such? That they can be exceptionally bright for so much brawn or that, considering their special skill, they are still pretty dumb? There is a risk of a mystique of Sport which can only be another glorification of the Lowest Common Denominator. I hope we shall soon have another novel from Mr. Glanville which will be, like *Diamond*, an exploration of individual and social complexity.

Mr. John Bingham's novel is informative too, to the outsider: and I don't see why we should not get our information in this palatable form. This time it is the newspaper-world, the death or murder of a newspaper; and Mr. Bingham treats this theme with the same skill, and the same kind of skill, he has used on more corporeal corpses, and also with the same kind of attention to circumstantiality: and I should say the same kind of basic abstractness.

In other words, with all respect to his publishers' claims, I do not believe that he has now moved into the class of "pure novelist." Readable though it is, this is like a thriller, a product of industry and planning, not of feeling and insight. Certainly Mr. Bingham has some respectable opinions about figures and elements which are socially significant. But his consciously Jewish lawyer, Abrahams, might well have been got up by careful reading, while the theme—a tottering newspaper being pushed over the brink by a libel-scrounger—seems, as a morality, very contrived. It could have been better treated with more irony.

What, after all, is a "pure novel"? Mr. Laurens van der Post's *The Seed and the Sower* which I find far more moving and meaningful than any of the others here, does not claim to be technically a novel at all. But the three stories are related both by their themes and by the presence in all of them of Colonel John Lawrence, who is the central figure although he does not act as the narrator. The setting is Far Eastern and war-time. The first story, "The Bar of Shadow," which has already been published, is easily the most satisfactory. It is an extremely penetrating and disturbing study of the psychology of a Japanese prison-camp commander, and might well act as a model for a new orthodoxy in our understanding of the mysterious Oriental—whether it is true or not. I think that Mr. van der Post is trying to make a racial hypothesis imaginatively convincing, and that he has succeeded. The penalty for failure in these cases is a kind of "Noble Savage" sentimentality, which he has easily avoided. But in the two other stories, particularly the last, "The Sword and the Doll," the theoretical structure seems to break through. And we may get the feeling that a certain philosophical or universal insight is more important to the author than the form of the fiction. With the general attitude I feel much sympathy: for instance, this, put into the mouth of the not altogether pleasing Jacques Celliers, whose psychological failure and later redemption occupy the middle of the book: "I know that only fact can save me, and I long passionately to be able from the fact of my being to forge a weapon strong enough to enable me to fight back against the power and pomp of unreality which is marching so boastfully against both me and the spirit of my time."

Mr. van der Post can write vividly and beautifully with a strong sense of the magnificence of natural setting. The atmosphere is sometimes emotionally so powerful that it almost falls into "pathetic fallacy." And why not? Ruskin objected to this wind of animism because it could be both false and Germanic. But in poetic fiction there is no real reason why Nature should not be one of the characters.

Kathleen Nott

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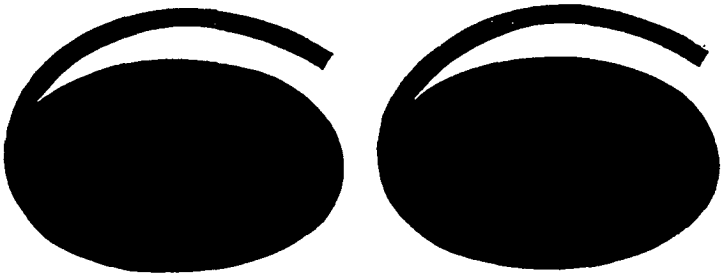

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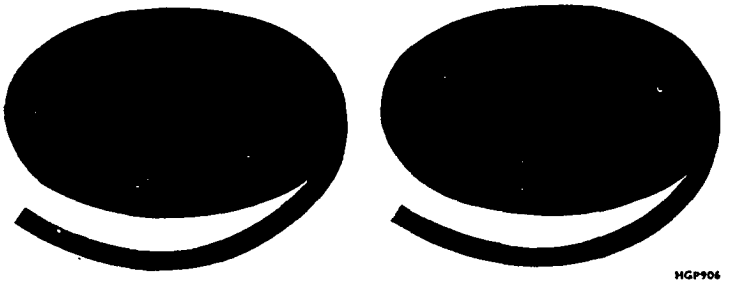

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Khrushchev on Modern Art . . .

[The following document, of whose authenticity we are convinced, is translated from a hitherto unpublished stenographic account of some of the remarks made recently by Chairman Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev at the exhibition of Soviet modern art in Moscow.]

THE FIRST EXTENDED PAUSE *is in front of one of Falk's paintings.*

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV: *"I would say that this is just a mess. It's hard to understand what this still-life is supposed to represent. I will probably be told that I have not reached the point where I can understand such works—the usual argument of our opponents in culture. Dmitri Stepanovich Polyansky told me a couple of days ago that when his daughter got married, she was given a picture of what was supposed to be a lemon. It consisted of some messy yellow lines which looked, if you will excuse me, as though some child had done his business on the canvas when his mother was away and then spread it around with his hands."*

Then, further along: "I don't like jazz. When I hear jazz, it's as if I had gas on the stomach. I used to think it was static when I heard it on the radio. I like music a lot and often listen to it on the radio. I even went so far as to carry a little Japanese radio around in my pocket. They make them very well there. . . .

"Even Shostakovich surprised us once in this connection. At the final concert of the plenary meeting of the Composers' Union we were regaled with a trio which wasn't entirely pleasurable listening. . . .

"Or take these new dances which are so fashionable now. Some of them are completely improper. You wiggle a certain section of the anatomy, if you'll pardon the expression. It's indecent. As Kogan once said to me when she was looking at a fox-trot, 'I've been married 20 years and never knew that this kind of activity is called the fox-trot!' . . .

"Jazz comes from the Negroes. They've had it for a long time, and here it's treated as a novelty. I understand our own Russian dances a lot better—Georgian and Armenian ones too. They are wonderful dances. . . .

"People tell me that I am behind the times and don't realise it, that our contemporary artists will be appreciated in 100 years. Well, I don't know what will happen in 100 years, but now we have to adopt a definite policy in art, emphasising it in the press and encouraging it materially. We won't spare a kopeck of government money for any artistic daubing. . . .

"As long as I am president of the Council of Ministers, we are going to support a genuine art. We aren't going to give a kopeck for pictures painted by jackasses. History can be our judge. For the time being history has put us at the head of this state, and we have to answer for everything that goes on in it. Therefore we are going to maintain a strict policy in art. I could mention that when I was in England I reached an understanding with Eden. He showed me a picture by a contemporary abstractionist and asked me how I liked it. I said I didn't understand it. He said he didn't understand it either, and asked me what I thought of Picasso. I said I didn't understand Picasso, and Eden said he couldn't understand Picasso either."

WHEN PASSING BY *the satirical drawings of Reshetnikov and Kukriniksy, N. S. Khrushchev indicated his approval, laughing in particular at Reshetnikov's satire on abstractionist painters.*

In front of paintings by Andronov, Mikhail and Pavel Nikonov, Basnetsov, and Egorshina:

V. A. SEROV *(pointing to these paintings, and especially to "The Raftsmen" by Andronov and "The Geologists" by Nikonov): "Some connoisseurs claim that these pictures are programmatic. We dispute that."*

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV: *"You are entirely correct." Then, in front of "The Geologists": "He can paint and sell these if he wants, but we don't need them. We are going to take these blotches with us into communism, are we? If government funds have been paid for this picture, the person who authorised it will have the sum deducted from his salary. Write out a certificate that this picture has not been acquired by the government. . . .*

"But who ordered it? And why? This painting shouldn't have been hung in the exhibition. Pictures should arouse us to perform great deeds. They should inspire a person. But what kind of picture is this? One jackass is riding on another. . . .

"No, we don't need pictures like these. As long as the people support us and have confidence in us we will carry out our own policy in art. And if pictures like these appear, it means that we are not doing our work properly. This includes the Ministry of Culture and the Central Committee's Commission on Ideology."

S. A. GERASIMOV (or V. A. SEROV): *"People say, by the way, that pictures like these are supported in the press. For instance, Konenkov's article in* Izvestiya *praises the sculptor Neizvestny and some of the other formalists."*

In passing by paintings of Korzhevsky and Zhevadronova, N. S. Khrushchev says: "These are good pictures, especially that one over there. You can feel the essence of youth in it. But why these bad pictures—a spoonful of pitch in a barrel of honey."

A propos a painting by Kugach: "It looks like a real winter scene!"

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"Blotches . . . Jackasses . . . Pederasts . . ."

AFTER A QUICK LOOK *at the upper halls, where the formalist paintings are hung, N. S. Khrushchev says: "What is this anyway? You think we old fellows don't understand you. And we think we are just wasting money on you. Are you pederasts or normal people? I'll be perfectly straightforward with you; we won't spend a kopeck on your art. Just give me a list of those of you who want to go abroad, to the so-called 'free world.' We'll give you foreign passports tomorrow, and you can get out. Your prospects here are nil. What is hung here is simply anti-Soviet. It's amoral. Art should ennoble the individual and arouse him to action. And what have you set out here? Who painted this picture? I want to talk to him. What's the good of a picture like this? To cover urinals with?"*

The painter, Zheltovsky, comes forward.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV: *"You're a nice-looking lad, but how could you paint something like this? We should take down your pants and set you down in a clump of nettles until you understand your mistakes. You should be ashamed. Are you a pederast or a normal man? Do you want to go abroad? Go on, then; we'll take you free as far as the border. Live out there in the 'free world.' Study in the school of capitalism, and then you'll know what's what. But we aren't going to spend a kopeck on this dog shit. We have the right to send you out to cut trees until you've paid back the money the state has spent on you. The people and government have taken a lot of trouble with you, and you pay them back with this shit. They say you like to associate with foreigners. A lot of them are our enemies, don't forget."*

Then, in front of a painting by Gribkov: "What's this?"

GRIBKOV: *"It's the year 1917."*

N. S. KH: *"Phooey. How much the state has spent on you, and this is how you repay it. My opinion is that you can all go to hell abroad. This is an art for donkeys. . . .*

"Comrade Ilichev, I am even more upset by the way your section is doing its work. And how about the Ministry of Culture? Do you accept this? Are you afraid to criticise?. . .

"They say that some of our writers praise these pictures and buy them. That's because our honoraria are high. Our writers are too prosperous and have money to throw away."

BELYUTIN, *one of the ideologists of the formalists, comes up.*

N. S. KH: *"Who are you? Who are your parents?"*

Belyutin answers.

N. S. KH: *"Do you want to go abroad? Who supports you?"*

BELYUTIN: *"I am a teacher."*

N. S. KH.: *"How can such a person teach? People like him should be cleared out of the teaching profession. They shouldn't be allowed to teach in the universities. Go abroad if you want; and if you don't want to, we'll send you anyway. I can't even talk about this without getting angry. I'm a patriot."*

In front of a painting by Shorts: "Why aren't you ashamed of this mess? Who are your parents?"

Shorts gives information about his parents, mentioning that his mother is dead.

N. S. KH.: *"It's a pity, of course, that your mother is dead, but maybe it's lucky for her that she can't see how her son is spending his time. What master are you serving anyway? Our paths are different. You've either got to get out or paint differently. As you are, there's no future for you on our soil."*

One of the bystanders says, "These are graphic artists. They do these pictures in their spare time to improve their skill" (general laughter).

N. S. KH.: *" I remember the Ukrainian satirist, Ostap Vishnya. In one article he gives the following conversation: 'Do you believe in God?' and the answer, 'At work I don't, and at home I do.' That's what these scratchings of yours are like. . . .*

"I used to be on friendly terms with the sculptor, Merkuryev. He was a great man, a real man. Once, in the Dresden Gallery, he pointed to some paintings of the Dutch masters and told me that our artists maintain that to appreciate a painting you have to stand back from it. The Dutch masters painted differently. You can look at their pictures through a magnifying glass and still admire them. But your paintings just give a person constipation, if you'll excuse the expression. They don't arouse any other feelings at all."

Turning to Zhutovsky, "Do you want to help us build communism? No, what you want is for people to consider you a misunderstood genius—a painter whom the future will appreciate. You are a hypocrite!"

In front of Zhutovsky's self-portrait: "Externally there is no resemblance. The picture is unnatural. But there is certainly a spiritual resemblance between the portrait and the original. You are stealing from society. You are a parasite. We have to organise our society so that it will be clear who is useful and who is useless. What right do you have to live in an apartment built by genuine people, one made of real materials?"

ZHUTOVSKY: *"But these are just experiments. They help us develop."*

N. S. KH.: *" Judging by these experiments, I am entitled to think that you are pederasts, and for that you can get 10 years. You've gone out of your minds, and now you want to deflect us from the proper course. No, you won't get away with it. . . .*

"Gentlemen, we are declaring war on you."

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LETTERS

Gutenberg Galaxy

I CANNOT UNDERSTAND how or why the oral symbolisation of immediate experience should be more "simultaneous" than the written or typographical symbolisation [Frank Kermode, "Between Two Galaxies," ECOUNTER, February]. Talking takes time. I have never found anything simultaneous in an hour-long sermon or political speech, not even in an hour-long religious ritual of chants and litanies.

Surely the real split is not between oral and typographical, but between immediate, integral *im*pression and analytic symbolical *ex*pression. Words are not the same as the things and events to which they refer. But things and events cannot be dealt with by human minds, and the experience of them cannot be communicated, except in words (and to a lesser extent in other kinds of symbols). Words are absolutely necessary; but, if taken too seriously, can be absolutely fatal. We have, therefore, to learn to make the best of both worlds—the world of immediate experience and the world of language. Wordsworth laid down a practical programme in his *Expostulation and Reply* and *The Tables Turned*. We must learn to get the best out of Matthew's universe of ordered words. An intelligent man is one who can move back and forth between the various universes of conceptual discourse and the universe of his own immediate experience, on every level from the visceral to the spiritual, from the biochemical to the æsthetic and the mystical. Taking typography too seriously is fatal. But it is equally fatal to take spoken words too seriously. The evil effects of addiction to one kind of symbols cannot be cured by establishing an addiction to another kind of symbols. It can be cured only by a systematic cultivation of experience on the non-symbolic level.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Los Angeles

Eleanor Marx

I READ Professor Lewis S. Feuer's article "Marxian Tragedians" in the November issue of ENCOUNTER with interest—and growing distaste. If I write to report and to defend this reaction, it is because I both admire some of Feuer's more academic work and because his approach to the tragedy of Eleanor Marx and to the Marxian *Weltanschauung* generally is all too symptomatic of the sophisticated forms that a contemptible conventionalism is capable of taking in our day and age.

Some of us, of course, will be grateful to Professor Feuer for reminding us of, or introducing us to, the personal life of Marx's favourite daughter and her relations with people who occupy some place in the intellectual history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Others will be interested in the purely human problem of a sensitive, able, and passionate woman in love with a man on whom she cannot, in any of a hundred important things, rely. But the intellectual history Feuer regards as background, the "human problem" is not one he analyses or portrays, but one that he takes advantage of. His main theme he himself describes in what was presumably an accompanying letter published by you in the "Authors" column: "Part of the tragedy, I think, did take a distinctive Marxian form in the sense that the Marxist ethic tended to obliterate the personal element far more than the various types of religious ethics. . . . The story of Eleanor Marx has always seemed to me to exhibit in the most personal form some of the problems which arise when Marxism is taken as a way of life."

This is sad and shoddy nonsense. Eleanor Marx's tragedy, on Feuer's own showing, has two aspects or, if one prefers, stages. First, as a "New Woman," freed from more conventional restraint by the death of her father, "she left her doll's house to enter a dungeon of deceptions." Second, having fallen in love with Edward Aveling (because he was a socialist?) and having discovered what he was, she was unable to end the relationship except through suicide. But if this is the tragedy, then surely it is common enough, and even its more distinctive flavour (Ibsen, discussing the mental effects of menstruation, etc.) is *Victorian* rather than Marxian. It is precisely the development that we have come to expect to occur among the sensitive and intelligent daughters of country parsons.

What, then, is Feuer's case for treating the life of Eleanor Marx as a Marxian tragedy and not as a Victorian, or a Feminine, or an Ibsenite tragedy? "Eleanor Marx's suicide," he writes,

> "in a blunt way refuted her father's ethic, for Marxism defined freedom as the abolition of classes, and called for regarding oneself as an appendage to the class struggle. Eleanor, in order to unite herself to the class struggle in Aveling's guise, committed surgery on her feelings, and brought unreality into her life. Eleanor's surviving sister, Laura, also killed herself a few years later, presumably when she and her husband felt they had nothing more to contribute to the socialist movement."

This paragraph represents Feuer's critical—and indeed only—argument. Let us examine it in detail. How does a suicide refute an ethic? It does so, if the ethic is supposed to solve all the problems of life in such a way as to make the individual happy with his lot, whatever it may be. I think I may claim to know a good deal about Marx's ethic;* I can find no indication in his work that he treated ethics in this way; nor do I find any indication that he "defined freedom as the abolition of classes"; nor do I believe that Marx had nothing to say to the individual except "Act to advance the class struggle." Feuer has simply confused the compli-

* *Ed. Note:*—Dr. Kamenka is the author of the recently published *Ethical Foundations of Marxism*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul).

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cated, inconsistent, but always critical strains in Marx's ethic with the pretensions of street-corner Christianity. Next, take the passage "Eleanor, in order to unite herself to the class struggle in Aveling's guise." Is Eleanor's tragedy Marxian because it was her Marxian beliefs, and nothing else, that made her fall in love with Aveling? Feuer has done nothing in his article to show that Aveling's socialism was a necessary—let alone a sufficient—condition for Eleanor's attachment; even if it were, it would make the tragedy no more Marxian than a woman's love for her rascally spiritual adviser makes her tragedy Christian; in either case, a resultant suicide would need to be explained in terms of individual psychology and not of whatever beliefs the relationship is supposed to have originated from or to embody and express. The reference to Laura, with its slightly scurrilous "presumably" deserves no serious discussion.

All this is not to say that the tragedy of Eleanor Marx does not raise serious and interesting issues. But these issues are precisely those which Feuer—in his obsessional belief that ethics is a means of finding happiness and conformity—does not raise. The crucial issues in the tragedy of Eleanor Marx are (1) her complicated and in many ways emotionally tense relationship with her father Karl, aggravated by the enormous strength of Karl's personality; (2) the nature of Aveling's appeal to Eleanor and why she needed him. Linked with this is another question of interest in its own right: How to explain Aveling?

Feuer raises none of these questions. Instead, he presents us with a sophisticated, footnoted version of an evangelist's horror story: the woman who committed suicide because she had not found meaning in life or faith in God. If there are "Marxians" who have opened themselves up to this sort of "refutation," they are not worth refuting.

EUGENE KAMENKA
Australian National University, Canberra

MR. KAMENKA's key criticism is that I regard ethics as concerned with human happiness, and a person's suicide as, under certain conditions, a refutation of his ethic. He says that Marx never treated ethics this way. In this Mr. Kamenka is right, but I was not writing to defend Marx's standpoint on these questions. Mr. Kamenka alludes to my "obsessional belief that ethics is a means of finding happiness and conformity." That ethics is concerned with happiness is a view I have learned from and share with thinkers from Spinoza to Mill and Freud. "Conformity" (fearful word) is tacked on by Mr. Kamenka like a congressional rider to an appropriation bill, but conformities and nonconformities alike are to be tested by their actual contribution to human happiness.

The suicide of a person in the prime of life, not poverty-stricken, but living under material circumstances which at least ninety-nine per cent of the human race would envy, seems to me an indication of false values much in the same way that a high suicide rate in a given society betokens a high degree of anomy. A life founded on false consciousness brings with it a false existence. Suicide is evidence of an impasse to which the person's false values have led him; he has found that his "values" have belied his underlying self. The values of a "false consciousness," of an ideology, heighten the self-destructive tendency in proportion to the degree they distort the person's character.

In what sense was Eleanor's life a specifically Marxian tragedy? In the sense that her Marxian upbringing was a necessary part of it. Her starting-point was not the moral philosophy of a country parson, but the advanced notions of class morality of her father and Engels. She came to grief not in revolt, like a parson's daughter against a parson's precepts, but precisely because she tried to found her own personal life on her father's philosophy. Indeed, when she entered into her free union with Edward Aveling, she had Engels' enthusiastic blessing. At the end of her life, Eleanor Marx wondered at the lack of a "moral sense" in Aveling. This very notion of a moral sense, universal in men (she compared its lack to deafness or near-sightedness), shows the extent to which her life's experience had carried her beyond her father's conception of class morality.

IT IS TRUE THAT an Ibsenite ingredient was part of Eleanor's philosophy. But Marxists at this time were welcoming Ibsen's indictment of bourgeois morality. Franz Mehring, for example, wrote words of high praise for the "searchlight" which Ibsen had turned on "the falsity of the bourgeois money marriage"; Ibsen, he said, had seen the curse of bourgeois society, though he didn't see the road to salvation. Eleanor had the Marxian direction beyond the purely negative Ibsenite criticism.

Mr. Kamenka demands that we explain Eleanor's suicide "in terms of individual psychology," not in terms of her beliefs. But surely, however, Mr. Kamenka will concede the measure of truth in Marx's notion that the individual is "the ensemble of the social relations." And if he, in Marxian fashion, regards Eleanor's existence as having determined her consciousness, then he should welcome my account which began with Eleanor's life as the youngest member of the Marx family, and traced the closeness of her identification with her father's standpoint. The point is that the Marxian upbringing did disable Eleanor in dealing with questions of personal life. For where all judgments of individuals are regarded as historical ones, as based essentially on the individual's role in the historical process, with everything else irrelevant or unimportant, the stage is set for a distinctive Marxian tragedy. This is the significance of Eleanor's ethical questioning of Marxism in her last days, her search for an independent moral sense.

In our historical era, the material content of "freedom" in the Marxian sense is to be taken as "the abolition of classes." For, if freedom generally is the recognition of necessity, then its specific meaning in our time coincides with the contemporary historical inevitability of the abolition of classes. There are various senses of "freedom," however, which occur in Marx's writings; I was referring to one which is certainly central.

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NEW WAVE IN RUSSIA?

Edward Crankshaw wrote in the *Observer* on February 3rd:

"... I have just been reading the January issue of that admirable publication devoted to Soviet and East European affairs, SURVEY... This is far and away the best and most informative conspectus of recent developments in literature and the arts in the Soviet Union. Max Hayward's general commentary and outline of developments since the thaw of 1953 is alone worth the money..."

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I AM NOT CLEAR AS to why Mr. Kamenka is angry with my reference to the suicide of Eleanor's sister, Laura. The suicide of Laura and Paul Lafargue made a deep impression on Marxists. Lenin, for instance, when he heard of it, said: "If you can't do any more work for the Party, you must be able to face the truth and die like the Lafargues." This seems to me to make all life revolve around the ideological imperatives: "Act to advance the class struggle," and "Cease to act when you cannot advance the class struggle." This conception of life is founded, I think, on a "false consciousness," and that is why I used the word "presumably" with reference to it.

Lastly, a word in defence of both street-corner Marxians and Christians. I have listened much to both, and indeed some of the best philosophy I ever heard was from such "people's philosophers" on Columbus Circle and Union Square, in New York City. The ultimate import of a theory emerges clearly, if sometimes crudely, at their hands. Mr. Kamenka, writing with the vigour of a street-corner doctrinarch, indicates the strange significance of this: that human happiness is of no concern to ethics, and that a person's self-destruction in no way reflects on the theory upon which he has based his life. I would regard such consequences as indicating that Mr. Kamenka's philosophy is false.

LEWIS S. FEUER

University of California

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"Pale Fire"

I WAS FASCINATED and enthralled by Vladimir Nabokov's brilliant exegesis of his latest novel, but why was it published under Miss Mary McCarthy's name? [ENCOUNTER, October 1962]. Whoever has read Miss McCarthy's pale polemics on other subjects could not possibly mistake this fiery essay for her handiwork, besides which the present piece is absolutely steeped in traditional Nabokovian imagery (clockwork toys, reflecting mirrors, chess moves) and presupposes an intimate knowledge of such diversified subjects as philology, entomology, lepidoptery, Pope, Shakespeare and the Russian language.... There are precedents, of course, for Nabokov criticising his own work—for example one of his early Russian novels, *Dar* (The Gift), the preface and afterword to "Lolita" and certain parts of his autobiographical memoirs—and I hope that one day this piece may appear in one volume with *Pale Fire*.

MICHAEL SCAMMELL

New York City

The Week of Cuba That Was

YOUR REPORTER of the *Week of Cuba* [ENCOUNTER, January] accuses those he disagrees with of "an almost total lack of understanding of the causes and character of the crisis"; he suggests that it is "unfair to submit the tenets of the 'better-red-than-dead' school of thought to rational examination" (not that he tries very hard), because "it is not a rational theory but an emotional reaction, the expression of very real fear"; he quotes Burke's remark that "no passion so effectively robs the mind of its power of acting and reasoning as fear"; and he insists that there weren't gonna be no war. Unfortunately he betrays an almost total lack of understanding of the causes and character of unilateralist and neutralist thought. Would it be any fairer to submit the tenets of the "better-*dead*-than-*red*" school of thought to rational examination? Is *it* a rational theory and not an emotional reaction, the expression of very real anger and rather unreal pride? Do anger and pride rob the mind of all its power of acting and reasoning any less effectively than fear? Is your Reporter sure there ain't gonna be no war next time?

Of course we believe that it is better to be free than dead *or* "red." But we also believe, in our emotional and irrational way, that it is better to be red than dead, because life is prior to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, because slaves might free themselves one day, and dead men just rot. And most people agree with us when it comes, as they say, to the crunch. What do people across the iron and bamboo curtain say? *Better red than dead.* What do people in concentration camps and torture chambers say? *Better nearly dead than quite dead.* Deeds speak more eloquently than words. Your Reporter admits that "it could be argued that *while there's life there's hope.*" Well, isn't there? Most people think so. Easy to say *Die for Freedom* when someone else dies in a faraway country of which you know nothing; not so easy when you

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Life & Letters Today

Washington

THE BIG WORD *with the Washington Ingroup this winter is "thrust," and anyone who wants to appear really in touch with the intellectual currents here ought to say it in crowded rooms as often as possible. This is a distinct change from the situation here during most of 1962 when the identifying code word of the Ingroup was "dialogue." There was a long indecisive struggle among champions of several words including such Pentagon favourites as "options," "escalation," and "crunch." The word that has been settled upon, it can be reported with the utmost certainty, is "thrust."*

Every Administration brings its peculiar insider's talk to Washington and inflicts it on the impressionable natives who want to feel close to the seats of power. Usually, however, a very few words set the tone of an Administration for its full lifetime. "Massive," for example, was popularised quite early in the Eisenhower Administration. Ingroup people also said things like "team," "finalise," "implement," and "gloom and doom."

The Kennedy Administration is trickier about its code. This season's Ingroup word may be ruthlessly abandoned without notice, so that the unwary climber who uses it may unwittingly betray himself as an Outgroupman. "Thrust" may be abandoned by nightfall, and "options," "escalation," or "crunch" installed in its place.

N.Y. TIMES

Moscow

A NUMBER OF BOOKS *described as "too offensive" to the Soviet Union were voluntarily removed by American officials to-day before the opening of a half-million dollar exhibit of 7,000 technical books from the United States. Although American officials would disclose neither the titles nor categories of the books removed, it was learned that some of the subject-matter involved Communist infiltration of American labour unions. Fewer than 75 books were omitted and replaced by other titles. American officials emphasised that no Soviet censorship was involved. Under the terms of a cultural agreement between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. no censorship is supposed to be imposed by either country. It was said that the books removed "were too offensive to the host for good taste."*

N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

New York

THE CRITIC *of "Time" is right about the Christ reference in the "Christopher Flanders" character in Tennessee Williams' new play, "The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More." But he is wrong about its novelty or its present importance in Mr. Williams' work. By way of establishing the symbolism one can add to the clues reported in "Time," where much is made of such matters as the hero's being asked: "Can you walk on water?" His name is an obvious reference to Honoré de Balzac's story, "Christ in Flanders," about a post-Gospel manifestation of Christ. Also, the Christ of this play has been preceded by false prophets—a false Truman Capote and a false Mary McCarthy. But who cares?*

THE TIMES

London

PRESIDENT DE GAULLE *is an awkward cuss, but he is not another Boney. We must somehow persuade him that America is only a continuation of Europe by other means, and that Shakespeare is as valuable and authentic a part of the European as Chateaubriand!*

THE GUARDIAN

Cologne

IN HIS RECENT *tour of West Germany, the Soviet poet Yevtushenko also visited the well-known German ex-Communist Wolfgang Leonhard. When he explained that he, Yevtushenko, had wept when Stalin died, his wife, Galina, interrupted him. "But I didn't," she said.*

DER SPIEGEL

Paris

ORSEN WELLES, *who has just completed the film of Kafka's* TRIAL, *says of Joseph K's death: "I have changed the end. It is no longer Kafka's. It is mine. In Kafka, K. dies a beaten man. In my version he protests to the very end."*

THE TIMES

Chicago

LENNY BRUCE, *the "blue" night club comedian, appears in a Chicago court on Monday to answer charges of obscenity. Among his defenders is Professor John Logan, of the Catholic University of Notre Dame, who wrote: "I find him a brilliant and inventive moralist in the great tradition of comic satire—Aristophanes, Chaucer, Joyce. . . ."*

SUNDAY TIMES

PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S *manner is essentially unplebeian, harking far back to the early aristocratic 18th-century leaders of the young Republic. Watching him perform at his first post-Cuba Press conference I was tempted even to go further [writes Peregrine Worsthorne] and see him almost in a Shakespearean light, as he marched to the rostrum, royally handsome and commanding, far more like a young king back from foreign wars than a republican leader about to be questioned by the Press.*

Indeed, to someone like myself who had not seen him in the flesh since his carefree senatorial days, the occasion was intensely, almost theatrically, moving, reminding me of that superb scene in Henry IV, Part Two, when Prince Hal ceases to be the playboy friend of Falstaff and assumes the grave authority of sovereign power.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

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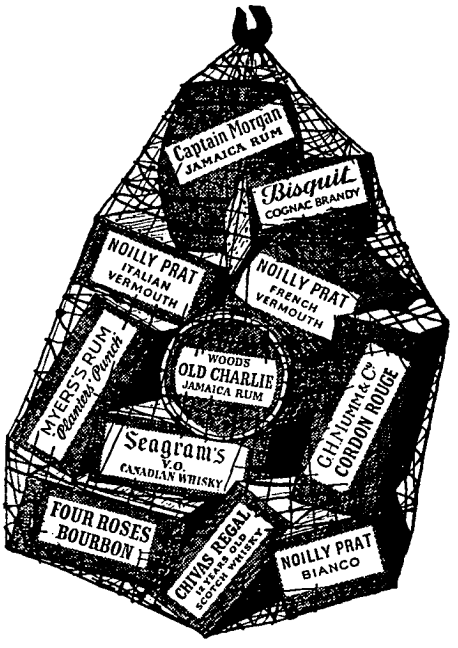
might die yourself; and not at all easy when everyone will die and no one will know why. Have we no right to die when we choose for our own cause?

The Committee of 100—which is not represented by Bertrand Russell or any other person—does not, as your Reporter says, "show far more sympathetic understanding for the one side than for the other in the global conflict"; we and our friends in the London Committee of 100 were all "quite certain whether the marches and demonstrations were in favour of Cuba's right to the bomb or against nuclear war." Not our fault if people see us protesting in Trafalgar Square but fail to see us protesting in Red Square; if your Reporter saw us protesting at the American Embassy but failed to see us protesting at the Russian Embassy on the same day; or if we failed to say what we thought about the Cuban crisis—we tried to do so in a peaceful way in a public place, and were arrested and fined for our pains (*Long live the Free World!*). We still mean what we say. We are still unilateralists and neutralists. We are still opposed to all bombs, all tests, all bases. Your Reporter could have known this if he had tried to find out. Once facts were sacred and comment was free. Now it is the other way round. Is your Reporter someone who says what happens, or something that makes a loud noise? What kind of "report" was the *Week of Cuba*? Information, or weaponry?

NICOLAS AND RUTH WALTER

London



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AP70

YOUR PENETRATING ANALYSIS of the conduct of the British Press during the Cuba crisis was fascinating to me as one who had spent that week in Washington and New York, just six years since I had last stayed in the American capital at the time of Suez. The similarities and the differences between the two crises, in terms of high politics, are too obvious to need belabouring, but my own experience underlined two contrasts which are highly relevant in the present context.

First, whereas American public opinion had been confused, nervy, and afraid during the Suez crisis, in Cuba week it was astonishingly united, calm, and resolute. Secondly, in 1956 the rupture of Anglo-American understanding was primarily at governmental level, not at that of the man in the street: outside official circles, which took their line from the White House and the Secretary of State, one met everywhere with friendship, sympathy, and eagerness to understand the British attitude. In 1962, from all accounts the reverse was true on the opposite side of the Atlantic: while the British Government gave President Kennedy its immediate and full support, British public opinion, at least as revealed by the Press, besides being confused, nervy, and afraid, showed an amazing lack of sympathy with and understanding of the American attitude, even of effort to understand it.

One must, I think, discount many of the arguments and comparisons used to express disagreement based on that central lack of understanding. If anyone beyond the far-Left soberly and seriously equates American and Soviet world policies, then emotional anti-Americanism has gone far deeper than I feared or than is suggested by my own knowledge of people in all walks of life. It is the ignorance, not the silliness, of the organs of British opinion that disturbs me most in the Cuba record: ignorance of American policy and its motives, even the palpable elements of geography, ignorance of President Kennedy and his counsellors, and above all ignorance of the facts of the world we live in. Thus what appeared to nine out of ten Americans as minimum action in face of a direct and deliberate threat to national safety and world peace, and a stand in the nick of time against a terrible heightening of the nuclear conflict in which we are all involved, appeared in far too many British eyes as a desperate essay in brinkmanship, a deliberate courting of nuclear war, for the sake of coercing a small country that had dared to cock a snook at Uncle Sam, even for the sake of some party advantage in an electoral campaign.

TWO MARGINAL EXCUSES must be allowed. The time-factor did not help. President Kennedy announced his action at 7 p.m. Washington time, midnight in London. Neither careful editorial reflection nor official Whitehall comment was possible before the national morning papers gave their first reactions, which set the pattern. Moreover, the President and the Secretary of State themselves said precious little to guide opinion during that week: this was conscious policy, which was in the event fully justified by the contribution it made to the greatest diplomatic success of a generation.

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Good Anglo-American relations cannot long survive such ignorance and misunderstanding at the levels at which public opinion is formed. Blame for this condition probably rests on both sides of the Atlantic. The image of America created in the Eisenhower years by John Foster Dulles and the late Senator McCarthy still lingers. Washington policies, for instance in the Congo and at the Bay of Pigs, have often been distasteful. American spokesmen like Mr. Mennen Williams and lately Mr. Dean Acheson have trodden hard on British corns. But there is no excuse for our behaving as if America was a raw and reckless youth grown too big for his boots. The United States is the greatest power the world has ever known, it is imbued with a genuine sense of responsibility and faith in the United Nations, and its aims are fundamentally the same as Britain's. This does not mean that its policies are always right or that we should not do our utmost to influence them for the better. But we should at least respect the United States Government's motives, as we expect them to respect ours, and acknowledge that where their supreme power in the Western World gives them supreme responsibility, their responsibility in turn gives them the right and duty to act.

On our side, it is asking a great deal of the American people to understand that we are really sound at heart when such cankers appear on the surface of our opinion; for they do not suffer from the same disease as has afflicted Britain for generations, and do not therefore appreciate its symptoms, the disease of a Left that masks a chronic anti-patriotism and insularity under a cloak of intellectual internationalism. We, after all, can scratch at the familiar sore of the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*; the Americans can only see its suppuration.

We also do well to remember that good Anglo-American relations matter more to Britain than to the United States. To the average American, Britain is only one of a number of allied countries. Her co-operation and support are valuable, but not all-important. British opinion during the Cuba crisis, as manifested in the Press and the actions of demonstrators, puzzled rather than upset him; certainly it did not shake his national self-confidence. The lesson he will probably have drawn is to pay less attention to it in the future than in the past. There is little doubt that Britain's world influence, which depends on faith in her reliability and courage as well as her experience and cleverness, has been relatively diminished by the Cuba crisis, and your analysis of the Press shows one reason why.

H. V. Hodson

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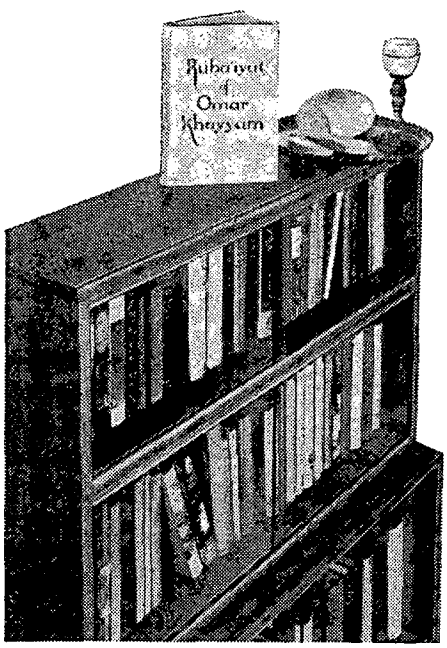

Come, fill the case...

Breadless, wineless, sadly songless in an unpoetic wilderness known as "the doghouse". Such poetic justice may well descend upon that dream-filled head of yours. For if you scatter your quatrains to the four corners of the living-room, don't feign surprise when you're hauled onto the carpet—Persian or otherwise—and faced with a wife waxing anything but lyrical. The gist of her few-thousand-word sermon being: "The proper place for books is a bookcase". Who can deny it?

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AUTHORS

Noel Annan is Provost of King's College, Cambridge. He is the author of a biography of Leslie Stephen (1951), and contributed a long essay ("Love Among the Moralists") to the February 1960 number of ENCOUNTER. In a recent speech on the subject of Educational Reform (*Guardian*, 19 February) he made a number of remarks worth quoting in connection with his current article:

"We have not yet begun to realise what vast numbers have to be given higher education. We are still thinking in terms of an *élite* and of expanding that *élite*. This is wrong. We ought to think of at least 25 per cent. of our adolescents as fit to receive full-time training of some kind or other....

"They're not all going to be able to sit for tripos at Cambridge University. But many of them are going to benefit from broadly based courses in science, technology, social sciences, and some arts subjects. That is why the Robbins Committee is important. It's going to show us just how far we've lagged in post-18-year-old education.

"It is going to tell existing universities that they have got to expand faster and far further than they expected and that universities are only one kind of higher education—that colleges of advanced technology, technical colleges and teachers' training colleges are just as important and should be given equal rights and funds....

"Every don and teacher is going to have to make sacrifices and they're going to have to change their present way of life and give us some things they know to be important if they are going to keep up the standard of research and teaching, while at the same time teach more students....

"Our chance to influence the world for good, our chance to raise our standard of life, our chance to de-barbarise our society, all these depend upon our making an explosion: an explosion of wrath against the present inadequate education that the children of our country are getting."

Owing to unforeseen difficulties publication of a new story by **Alexander Solzhenitsyn,** which was to have been included in this number, has had to be postponed until next month....

R. H. S. Crossman's article on Walter Bagehot, of which the first part appeared in our March number, forms the introduction to the paperback edition of Bagehot's *The English Constitution,* shortly to be published by Collins in their Fontana Series.

The translation of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by **Max Hayward** and **Ronald Hingley** will be published in England by the Pall Mall Press on April 5th.

AFRICA & DEMOCRACY

RITA HINDEN

Of this ENCOUNTER pamphlet the Editor of the *New Statesman* wrote in his "London Diary": "I agree with her judgment that 'the irreducible minimum of democratic institutions ... are a representative assembly, civil liberties and the rule of law'. But what do 'civil liberties' and the 'rule of law' mean in communities which are only just emerging from colonial rule? I wish I knew ..."

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The editorial and business offices of ENCOUNTER are at 25 Haymarket, London S.W.1. A stamped addressed envelope (English stamp) or international reply coupons should accompany MSS, otherwise they cannot be returned. For subscription details please see page 1.

ENCOUNTER is published by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 14 Carlisle Street, London, W.1. for THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM, 104 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris 8, France. PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Denis de Rougemont. SECRETARY-GENERAL Nicolas Nabokov.

The views expressed in the pages of ENCOUNTER *are to be attributed to the writers, not the sponsors*

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES

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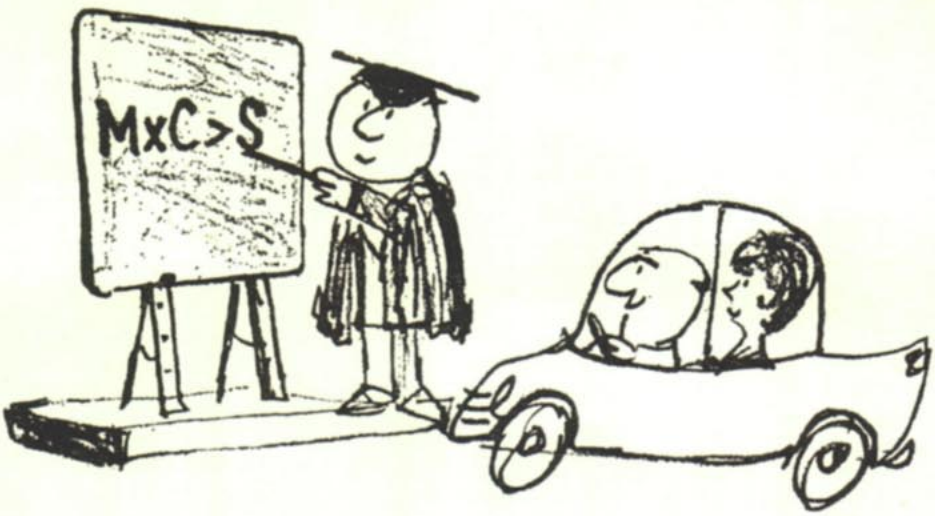

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Translated by Ivor Montagu and Herbert Marshall

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